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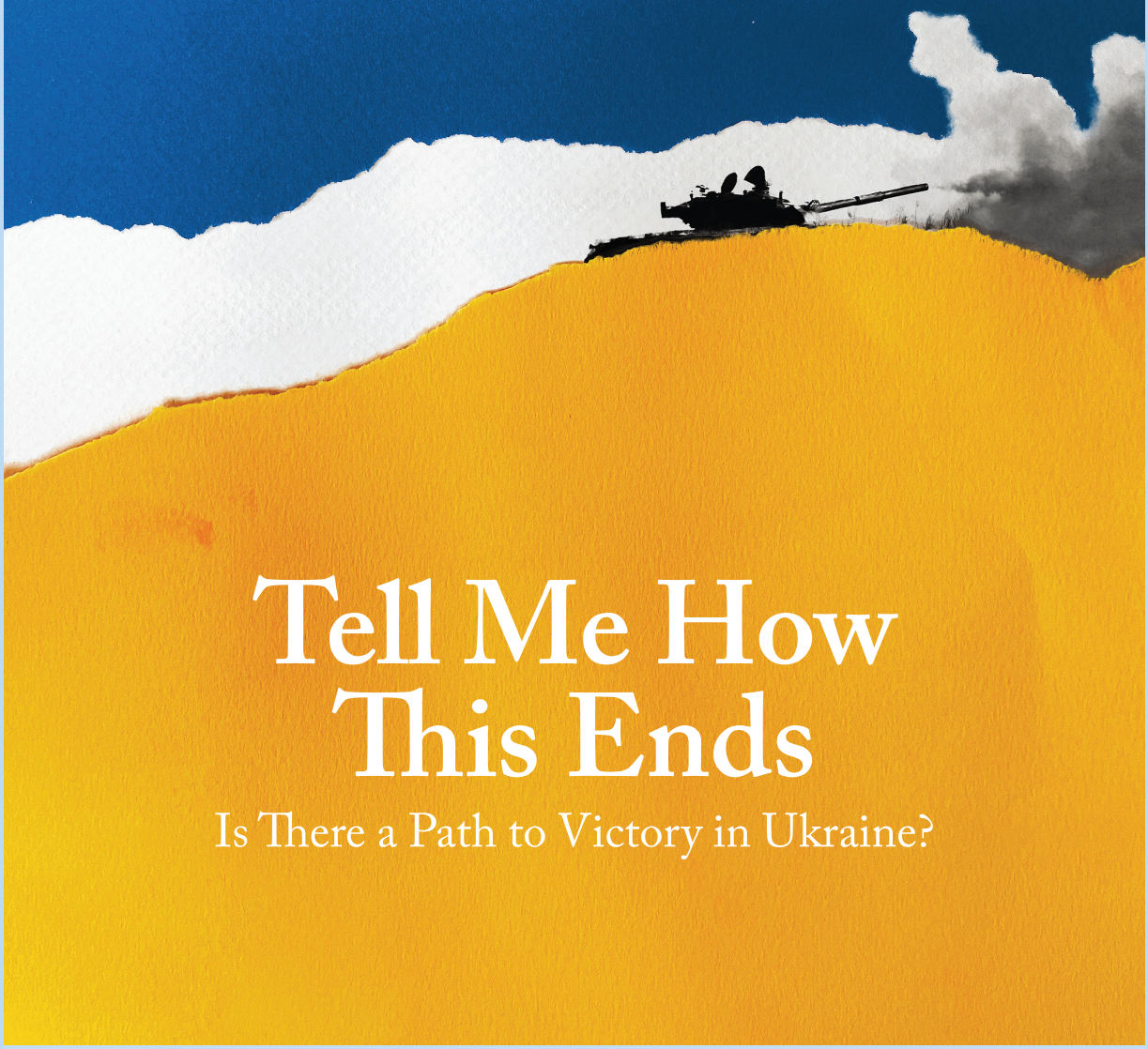
JULY/AUGUST 2023



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Essays

The Treacherous Path to a Better Russia 8
Ukraine's Future and Putin's Fate
ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR AND ERICA FRANTZ

An Unwinnable War 22
Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine
SAMUEL CHARAP

The Korea Model 36
Why an Armistice Offers the Best Hope for Peace in Ukraine
CARTER MALKASIAN

How Wars Don't End 52
Ukraine, Russia, and the Lessons of World War I
MARGARET MACMILLAN

Europe's Real Test Is Yet to Come 66
Will the Continent Ever Get Serious About Its Own Security?
RADEK SIKORSKI

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Essays

The Great Convergence 78
Global Equality and Its Discontents
BRANKO MILANOVIC

Why the World Still Needs Trade 94
The Case for Reimagining—Not Abandoning—Globalization
NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA

Don't Count the Dictators Out 104
The Underappreciated Resilience of Today's Autocracies
LUCAN AHMAD WAY

China Is Ready for a World of Disorder 116
America Is Not
MARK LEONARD

India as It Is 128
Washington and New Delhi Share Interests, Not Values
DANIEL MARKEY

Can India Become a Green Superpower? 144
The Stakes of the World's Most Important Energy Transition
ARUNABHA GHOSH

The Real Origins of the Border Crisis 156
How a Broken Asylum System Warped American Immigration
JULIA PRESTON

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Energy Geopolitics	Carolyn Kissane
War Crimes	Francine Hirsch
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Global Famine	Daniel Maxwell
Iran at a Crossroads	Lawrence Potter
Climate Migration	Karen Jacobsen

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Reviews and Responses

The End of Democratic Capitalism? 172
How Inequality and Insecurity Fueled a Crisis in the West
DARON ACEMOGLU

The Antiliberal Revolution 181
Reading the Philosophers of the New Right
CHARLES KING

China's Rewritten Past 190
How the Communist Party Weaponizes History
MARY GALLAGHER

Can the Two-State Solution Be Saved? 196
Debating Israel's One-State Reality
MICHAEL OREN; MARTIN INDYK; DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN; ASAD GHANEM; ROBERT SATLOFF; MICHAEL BARNETT, NATHAN BROWN, MARC LYNCH, AND SHIBLEY TELHAMI

Letters to the Editor 210

The Archive 212

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The Treacherous Path to a Better Russia

Ukraine's Future and Putin's Fate

ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR AND ERICA FRANTZ

"For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," U.S. President Joe Biden said of his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, a month after Russia launched a brutal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Biden's off-the-cuff remark, which his administration swiftly sought to walk back, did not merely reflect anger at the destruction unleashed by Putin's war of choice. It also revealed the deeply held assumption that relations between Russia and the West cannot improve as long as Putin is in office. Such a sentiment is widely shared among officials in the transatlantic alliance and Ukraine, most volubly by Ukrainian President Volodymyr

ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR is Senior Fellow and Director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. From 2015 to 2018, she was deputy national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

ERICA FRANTZ is Associate Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University.

They are the co-authors, with Natasha Lindstaedt, of *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes*.

Illustration by Rob Dobi

Zelensky himself, who last September ruled out peace talks until a new Russian leader is in place.

There is good reason to be pessimistic about the prospects of Russia's changing course under Putin. He has taken his country in a darker, more authoritarian direction, a turn intensified by the invasion of Ukraine. The wrongful detention of *The Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich in March and the sentencing of the opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza to a 25-year prison term in April, for example, are eerily reminiscent of measures from Soviet times. Once leaders grow to rely on repression, they become reluctant to exercise restraint for fear that doing so could suggest weakness and embolden their critics and challengers. If anything, Putin is moving Russia more and more toward totalitarianism as he attempts to mobilize Russian society in support of not just his war on Ukraine but also his antipathy to the West.

As the war rages on, Putin's hold on power strengthens.

If the West's relations with Russia are unlikely to change while Putin is in power, perhaps things could improve were he to depart. But the track record of political transitions that follow the exits of longtime authoritarian leaders offers little room for optimism. The path to a better Russia is not just narrow—it is treacherous. Authoritarian leaders rarely lose power while still waging a war they initiated. As long as the war continues, Putin's position is more secure, making positive change less likely. What is more, authoritarian regimes most often survive in the wake of the departure of longtime leaders such as Putin; were Putin to die in office or be removed by insiders, the regime would most likely endure intact. In such a case, the contours of Russian foreign policy would stay largely the same, with the Kremlin locked in a period of protracted confrontation with the West.

One development, however, could spark more substantive change in Russia: a Ukrainian victory. Kyiv's triumph in the war raises the possibility, even if only slightly, that Putin could be forced out of office, creating an opening for a new style of Russian government. A Russian defeat in the war could galvanize the kind of bottom-up pressure that is needed to upend Putin's regime. Such a development carries risks—of violence, chaos, and even the chance of a more hardline government emerging in the Kremlin—but it also opens the

possibility of a more hopeful future for Russia and for its relations with its neighbors and the West. Although fraught, the most likely path to a better Russia now runs through Ukrainian success.

THE PERSISTENCE OF PUTIN

The first barrier to a post-Putin Russia is, of course, Putin himself. After 23 years in power and despite the challenges that have mounted since his invasion of Ukraine, Putin looks set to retain power until at least 2036—the end of his constitutional term limit—perhaps even longer. Since the end of the Cold War, the typical autocrat who had governed a country for 20 years and was at least 65 years old (Putin is 70) ended up ruling for about 30 years. When such leaders governed personalist autocracies—where power is concentrated in the leader, rather than in a party, junta, or royal family—their typical tenure lasted even longer, as much as 36 years.

Of course, not all autocrats are so durable; just a quarter of post–Cold War autocrats have ruled for 20 years or more. Putin's durability stems from the creation in Russia of what the political scientist Milan Svolik calls an "established autocracy," in which regime officials and political and economic elites are fully dependent on the leader and invested in maintaining a status quo from which they benefit. The longer such established autocrats are in power, the less likely they are to be removed by the regime's insiders. A strong consensus among governing officials about the need to use repression to maintain stability, as is currently on full display in Putin's Russia, further reduces the likelihood that the leader will be removed against his will.

Russia's war in Ukraine has done little to change Putin's outlook. His grip on power has tightened and will remain strong for as long as the fighting continues. Wars encourage people to rally around the flag, suppressing disagreement and dissent for the sake of national solidarity; polls have shown that Putin's approval rating shot up ten points after he launched the invasion. As a wartime president, Putin has felt empowered to clamp down on critics and quash reporting by independent media outlets and nongovernmental organizations. Perhaps more important, the war has better insulated him from potential challengers from within. A stretched military lacks the bandwidth to mount a coup. In any case, the security services have profited from the war and have little incentive to throw in their lot with coup plotters.

For these reasons, the dynamics created by the war and Putin's own actions have made him more rather than less likely to retain power as the war rages on, further deferring political change in Russia.

THE TSAR IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE TSAR

Still, Putin will not rule forever. At some point, there will be a post-Putin Russia, even if it arrives only after his death. Since the end of the Cold War, 40 percent of longtime leaders (those rulers in power 20 years or more) of personalist autocracies have relinquished power by dying. Putin appears set to remain in office until the bitter end.

The extreme personalization of the political system, including the absence of a strong ruling party apparatus in Russia, makes Putin's passing a potentially perilous period. The most likely scenario is that power will pass to the prime minister, currently Mikhail Mishustin, who would become the acting president, as the formal rules dictate. The upper house of Russia's parliament would then have two weeks to schedule an election. During that time, the Russian elite would battle to determine who would replace Putin. The transition process could be chaotic as key actors vie for power and try to position themselves in ways that maximize and secure their political influence. The list of regime insiders that would battle it out is long and includes the likes of former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev; Sergey Kiriyenko, Putin's first deputy chief of staff; and Dmitry Patrushev, Russia's agriculture minister, whose father, Nikolai, is the head of the Security Council. Others outside the regime, such as Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner mercenary recruitment firm, could add turbulence to the transition. But ultimately, the fractious elites would most likely converge on a technocrat, someone in the vein of Mishustin or Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, or another seemingly weak consensus candidate whom all players believe can be controlled and who will preserve the regime that benefits them.

Once the dust settles, Russia will almost certainly remain an authoritarian country. Since the end of the Cold War, authoritarian regimes have outlasted 89 percent of the longtime leaders who died in office. And in every instance in which an authoritarian leader's death led to the collapse of his regime, its replacement was also authoritarian. Even in personalist autocracies, where the question of succession is considerably fraught, the same regime has survived the leader's death 83 percent of the time. Occasionally, an authoritarian leader's death

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in office can shift the political landscape in liberalizing ways, as when Lansana Conté died in Guinea in 2008, and free and fair elections were held in 2010 for the first time since that country's independence. More often, however, an authoritarian leader's death in office is a remarkably unremarkable event.

When leaders are ousted through a coup or unseated in elections, it is safe to assume that some portion of the elite and the citizenry have lost faith in them. That disgruntlement places the regime itself in jeopardy. But when leaders die of natural causes, no political machinations underlie their demise. The rudiments of the regime remain as they were, and elites have little interest in rocking the boat. Although they may feud behind closed doors about who should take over the leadership, they usually get in line behind whichever individual they deem the safest bet for the regime's survival.

Were Putin to die in office, his successor would probably change little about the Russian regime and its external relations. Successors who deviate from the status quo invite fierce resistance from the old guard, who maintain considerable control over the levers of power in the system. New leaders who inherit office from deceased autocrats therefore tend to adhere to the previous program. When they try to go off track, demonstrating a tentative interest in liberalizing reform—as did Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan during their first terms in office—the organs of the state loyal to their predecessors usually pressure them to revert to more traditionally repressive practices.

Successors of deceased autocrats also tend to keep waging their predecessors' wars even when such wars are going badly. The political scientist Sarah Croco has found that successors who come from within the regime are likely to continue the conflicts they inherit, given that they would be seen as culpable for a wartime defeat. In other words, even if Putin's successor does not share the same wartime aims, this leader will be concerned that any settlement that looks like defeat would abruptly bring his tenure to an end. Beyond figuring out how to end the war, Putin's successor will be saddled with a long list of vexing problems, including how to settle the status of illegally annexed territories such as Crimea, whether to pay Ukraine wartime reparations, and whether to accept accountability for war crimes committed in Ukraine. As such, should Putin die in office, Russia's relations with the United States and Europe will likely remain complicated, at best.

A SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

The war has strengthened Putin's hold on power, and even his death may not usher in significant change. At this point, only a seismic shift in the political landscape could set Russia on a different path. A Ukrainian triumph, however, could precipitate such a shift. The clearest victory for Ukraine would entail the restoration of its internationally recognized 1991 borders, including the territory of Crimea that Russia annexed in 2014. Battlefield realities will make such a comprehensive victory difficult to accomplish, but lesser outcomes that see Russia lose parts of Ukraine that it held before the February 2022 invasion would still send an unambiguous signal of Putin's incompetence as a leader, one the Kremlin cannot readily suppress for domestic audiences. Such outcomes would raise the prospect, even if only slightly, of Putin's ouster and a greater reckoning in the Kremlin. The most probable path to political change in Russia, then, runs through Ukraine.

> A clear Ukrainian victory could spur major change in Russia.

A Russian defeat will not easily translate into a change at the top. The personalist nature of Putin's regime creates particularly strong resistance to change. Personalist dictatorships have few institutional mechanisms to facilitate coordination among potential challengers, and the elite tend to view their own fates as intertwined with that of the leader; these dynamics help personalist rulers withstand military losses.

But even personalist authoritarians are not immune to the fallout of a poor military performance. The political scientists Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans find that from 1919 to 2003, just under half of all rulers who lost wars also lost power shortly thereafter. As with other seismic events such as economic or natural disasters, military defeats can expose leaders as incompetent, shattering their aura of invincibility. Shocks can create a focal point for mobilization, opening the way for the collective action necessary to dislodge entrenched authoritarian rulers. In such systems, citizens who want reform often exist in larger numbers than assumed but keep their preferences hidden. Operating frequently in a distorted and unreliable information environment, they know little about whether others share their views, leading to a situation in which everyone keeps their heads down, and opposition remains private. But a triggering event such as a military defeat can change calculations, encouraging reformist citizens (even

if they are only a small minority) to go public with their positions and leading to a cascade effect in which more and more citizens do the same. Put simply, a defeat in the war could serve as the spark that mobilizes opposition to Putin's rule.

Crucially, in the event of a Russian defeat, moves against Putin will most likely not come directly from his inner circle. In personalist systems such as Putin's Russia, regime insiders tend to struggle to coordinate an effective challenge to the leader, not least because the leader seeks to play them off one another. The Russian elite are split into what the Russian analyst Tatiana Stanovaya calls the "technocrats," who are senior bureaucrats, regional governors, and other implementers of Putin's policies, and the "patriots," who are the heads of the security services, senior officials in Putin's United Russia party, and the likes of Prigozhin. These groups hold different visions for solving Russia's problems and shaping the country's future. There is therefore a very real risk that a move by one group would not be supported by the other, potentially bringing down the whole system from which they all benefit. Such dangers create high barriers to any challenge to Putin from the inside. Even if some members of the elite wanted to punish Putin for wartime failure, they would have a hard time mustering a united front.

Putin has sought to divide his officials to better insulate himself from a coup. For example, the patriot camp—comprising Russia's security services and the most likely origin of an elite move against Putin—is intentionally segmented into the Federal Guard Service, the National Guard, and the Federal Security Service, hindering the sort of unity and coordination necessary for a coup. The current absence of a viable alternative to Putin also means there is no center of gravity around which a challenge could coalesce. His ability to use the security services to monitor dissent (including using one service to monitor another) and the high costs that come with the detection of dissent further lessen the chances of an elite rebellion from within.

The data confirm that longtime authoritarian leaders face little risk of coups. Among post–Cold War authoritarian leaders in power for 20 years or more, only ten percent have been ousted in a coup. And, tellingly, no longtime personalist authoritarian leader over 65 (such as Putin) has been ousted in a coup in this period.

But forces originating outside the regime could unseat Putin and meaningfully change Russia's approach to the world. Given the lack of effective institutions to channel dissent in today's Russia, opposition to

Putin could spill over, creating a groundswell that could dislodge him. In fact, in cases in which longtime personalist authoritarian leaders do not die in office, the most common way that they are pushed out of power is by pressure from outside the regime. Since the end of the Cold War, a third of personalist dictators who were in power for 20 years or more were toppled by popular protests or armed rebellions.

Putin's actions since the invasion raise the possibility of such pressure. Traditionally, autocrats seek to create an apathetic, demobilized citizenry that they can easily control. Until the invasion, Putin presided over Russia this way. Since he began the war, however, he has been forced to announce a "partial mobilization," calling up 300,000 Russians to fight in Ukraine. He has placed Russia on a wartime footing. As the Russian writer Andrei Kolesnikov has observed, it is no longer possible for Russians to stay disengaged. "More and more, Russians who are economically dependent on the state are finding that they have to be active Putinists," he noted in these pages. Public acts of support for the regime have become more common, as have incidents in which Russians report on the "antipatriotic" activities of their fellow citizens. But a more mobilized society could ultimately prove difficult for the regime to control.

MASS APPEAL

A bottom-up challenge to Putin's rule would create the possibility of political change in Russia but is not without risks. Pressure from below brings with it the potential for chaos and violence should it culminate in an armed rebellion, for example. In Russia, efforts by ethnic minorities to push for greater sovereignty, as they did after the fall of the Soviet Union, could further delegitimize Putin and even lead to his ouster. Several factors work against such centrifugal forces. Putin has increased his influence over regional leaders by making them more dependent on Moscow; patriotic pride in the Russian state remains strong in the republics; and the cause of secession is not especially popular anywhere in Russia's sprawl of republics. Yet the comparative data suggest it should not be dismissed. The political scientist Alexander Taaning Grundholm has shown that although the personalization of an autocracy makes a leader less vulnerable to internal threats such as coups, it does so at the expense of raising the risk of civil war. In the post–Cold War era, 13 percent of longtime personalist leaders were ousted through civil wars.

Already, Russia's regions have borne the brunt of the costs of Putin's war in Ukraine. The Kremlin has relied disproportionately on fighters from Russia's poorest regions composed of large populations of ethnic minorities, including once rebellious republics such as Chechnya and provinces such as Buryatia and Tuva. In Tuva, for instance, one of every 3,300 adults has died fighting in Ukraine. (The comparable figure for Moscow is one of every 480,000 adults.) In other regions such as Khabarovsk, people have been disillusioned with Moscow for some time, as evidenced by antigovernment protests there in 2020 after the Kremlin arrested the region's popular governor. Another round of mobilization concentrated in the regions, coupled with mounting economic hardship, could feed secessionist sentiment.

After the war, Russia will almost certainly remain an authoritarian country.

A military defeat for Russia could be the catalyst to set the process in motion. A Ukrainian victory would signal further weakness in Russia's central authority and in the Russian military, increasing the likelihood that secessionist groups see the moment as ripe for taking up arms. The return to Russia's regions of now veteran fighters with access to weapons but few economic prospects would further facilitate such movements. Political entrepreneurs, such as Prigozhin, may also factor into these dynamics. Prigozhin's efforts to upset the power balance in the Putin regime could ignite conflict between the Wagner paramilitary company and the Russian armed forces and security services, and flare into outright insurgency.

The Kremlin would, of course, meet any secessionist bids with violence, as it did during Russia's two wars with Chechnya. It is impossible to predict whether such moves for independence could succeed or whether a leadership change at the top, forced by this growing debacle, could prompt a national reckoning and lead Russians to abjure their country's imperialist designs on their neighbors.

What is more certain, however, is that violent upheaval tends to beget more violence. When post–Cold War autocrats have been ousted as a result of civil war, their departures have virtually guaranteed the establishment of new dictatorships or, even worse, outright state failure. Examples include the emergence of the Kabila family's regime in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) after

the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Soko in 1997 and the breakdown of the state in Libya after Muammar al-Qaddafi's ouster in 2011. Should an armed insurgency unseat Putin, not only would the aftermath be violent, but the odds of a new dictatorship coming to power would also be high.

But there is another, less bloody form of bottom-up pressure that could usher in a more liberal Russia: popular protests. Twenty percent of longtime personalist authoritarian leaders in the post–Cold War era have been ousted by mass protests. Of course, such a movement faces incredible obstacles in today's Russia: high levels of repression, the Kremlin's dismantling of the opposition, and the exodus of hundreds of thousands of (often liberal) Russians since the invasion who might have otherwise taken to the streets. And even if dissenters could crowd public squares in large numbers, large-scale protests are by no means guaranteed to topple Putin, given that authoritarian regimes can generally ride out such movements. Consider, for example, the experience of Iran this year, Belarus in 2020 (and in 2010), and Russia itself after controversial elections in 2011 and 2012. In each case, an authoritarian regime suddenly seemed vulnerable in the face of mass protests, only to reassert its control, often violently.

The aftermath of the mass protests that ousted Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011 and Omar al-Bashir in Sudan in 2019 reveal that such movements can also bring new, and potentially worse, authoritarian regimes to power. The military coup that toppled the democratically elected leader Mohamed Morsi in Egypt in 2013 illustrates well that powerful security apparatuses do not simply go away when authoritarian regimes lose power. Should these actors conclude that democracy does not suit their interests, they can simply use force to snuff it out. Even worse, events in Sudan this year make clear that the security apparatus itself is often not unified after the end of personalist rule. Once a strongman is no longer at the helm, his divide-and-conquer strategies can pave the way for conflict to explode among different factions. The security forces in Russia are certainly powerful enough to mount a formidable challenge to any leader who threatens their interest. And their division into distinct groups increases the chance that they might come to blows with one another. Successful mass protests are not, in other words, guaranteed to produce a better Russia.

Nevertheless, popular protests provide the most promising path to a more liberal Russia. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been seven instances in which an authoritarian leader who had been in power for 20 years or more was unseated through protests. In three of those—in Indonesia in 1998, Tunisia in 2011, and Burkina Faso in 2014—the countries staged democratic elections within two years. Those odds may seem low (and young democracies can backslide), but consider that there are no examples of democratization after the departure of similar authoritarians who died in office or were overthrown via a coup or civil war. Other routes to a better, democratic future simply do not exist. Put simply, Russians themselves have the best chance of bringing about a better Russia.

PREPARING FOR A POST-PUTIN RUSSIA

No matter how he leaves office, Putin's exit will likely occur with little warning. His departure will spur significant debate about how best to approach a post-Putin Russia, not just within policymaking circles in Washington but within the transatlantic alliance more broadly. Some allies will view Putin's demise as an opportunity to reset relations with Moscow. Others will remain adamant in their view that Russia is incapable of change. The United States must therefore consult allies now about the best approach to a post-Putin Russia to avoid the prospect that his departure becomes divisive. The unity of the alliance will continue to be critical to managing relations with a future Russia.

In any scenario, it will be difficult to discern the intentions of a new Russian leader, even one who comes to power with the backing of the Russian people. Rather than seeking to decipher Kremlin intentions—which a new leader will have an incentive to misrepresent to secure concessions from the West—the United States and European countries should be prepared to clearly articulate their conditions for an improved relationship. Such conditions should include, at a minimum, Russia's full withdrawal from Ukraine, reparations for wartime damage, and accountability for its human rights violations. As much as the United States and European countries will want to stabilize relations with a post-Putin Russia, Moscow must also be interested in the proposition.

Given the dim prospects for and the uncertain outcome of any future protests, the expectation of U.S. and European officials should

be that Russia will remain an autocracy even after Putin departs. Since the end of the Cold War, authoritarianism has persisted beyond the departure of a longtime autocratic leader in 76 percent of cases. When such leaders are also older personalist autocrats, authoritarianism endures (or states fail) 92 percent of the time. Such leaders deeply entrench authoritarian institutions and practices, casting a long shadow over the countries they rule.

Managing relations with Moscow therefore requires a long-term and sustainable strategy to constrain Russia and its ability to wage aggression beyond its borders. Such a strategy should also aim to weaken the grip of authoritarianism in Russia over time. Corruption has been a key enabler of the Putin regime; illicit networks entrench regime interests and prevent individuals outside the regime from gaining influence within the system. To weaken these barriers, Washington must properly enforce sanctions on the Kremlin's cronies in the business world, combat money laundering, make financial and real estate markets in the United States and Europe more transparent, and support investigative journalists in their bid to uncover such corruption. The United States can also bolster Russian civil society, an important force in forging a more liberal and democratic country, beginning with supporting the work of the many actors in Russian civil society—including journalists and members of the opposition—who have fled the country since the start of the war in February 2022. Backing them now would help lay the groundwork for a better relationship between the United States and a post-Putin Russia.

Ultimately, however, Washington and its allies can do little to directly shape Russia's political trajectory. A better Russia can be produced only by a clear and stark Ukrainian victory, which is the most viable catalyst for a popular challenge to Putin. Such a resounding defeat is also required to enable Russians to shed their imperialist ambitions and to teach the country's future elites a valuable lesson about the limits of military power. Support for Ukraine—in the form of sustained military assistance and efforts to anchor the country in the West through membership in the European Union and NATO—will pave the way for improved relations with a new Russia. Getting there will be hard. But the more decisive Russia's defeat in Ukraine, the more likely it is that Russia will experience profound political change, one hopes for the better.

An Unwinnable War

Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine

SAMUEL CHARAP

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a moment of clarity for the United States and its allies. An urgent mission was before them: to assist Ukraine as it countered Russian aggression and to punish Moscow for its transgressions. While the Western response was clear from the start, the objective—the endgame of this war—has been nebulous.

This ambiguity has been more a feature than a bug of U.S. policy. As National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan put it in June 2022, "We have in fact refrained from laying out what we see as an endgame. . . . We have been focused on what we can do today, tomorrow, next week to strengthen the Ukrainians' hand to the maximum extent possible, first on the battlefield and then ultimately at the negotiating table." This approach made sense in the initial months of the conflict.

SAMUEL CHARAP is a Senior Political Scientist at the RAND Corporation and a co-author of *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia*. He served on the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State during the Obama administration.

Illustration by Diego Mallo

The trajectory of the war was far from clear at that point. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was still talking about his readiness to meet his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, and the West had yet to supply Kyiv with sophisticated ground-based rocket systems, let alone tanks and long-range missiles as it does today. Plus, it will always be difficult for the United States to speak about its view on the objective of a war that its forces are not fighting. The Ukrainians are the ones dying for their country, so they ultimately get to decide when to stop—regardless of what Washington might want.

But it is now time that the United States develop a vision for how the war ends. Fifteen months of fighting has made clear that neither side has the capacity—even with external help—to achieve a decisive military victory over the other. Regardless of how much territory Ukrainian forces can liberate, Russia will maintain the capability to pose a permanent threat to Ukraine. The Ukrainian military will also have the capacity to hold at risk any areas of the country occupied by Russian forces—and to impose costs on military and civilian targets within Russia itself.

These factors could lead to a devastating, years-long conflict that does not produce a definitive outcome. The United States and its allies thus face a choice about their future strategy. They could begin to try to steer the war toward a negotiated end in the coming months. Or they could do so years from now. If they decide to wait, the fundamentals of the conflict will likely be the same, but the costs of the war—human, financial, and otherwise—will have multiplied. An effective strategy for what has become the most consequential international crisis in at least a generation therefore requires the United States and its allies to shift their focus and start facilitating an endgame.

WHAT WINNING DOESN'T LOOK LIKE

As of the end of May, the Ukrainian military was on the verge of conducting a significant counteroffensive. After Kyiv's successes in two earlier operations in the fall of 2022, and given the generally unpredictable nature of this conflict, it is certainly possible that the counteroffensive will produce meaningful gains.

Western policymakers' attention is primarily devoted to delivering the military hardware, intelligence, and training necessary to make that happen. With so much seemingly in flux on the battlefield, some might argue that now is not the time for the West to start discussions on the endgame. After all, the task of giving the Ukrainians a chance

at a successful offensive campaign is already straining the resources of Western governments. But even if it goes well, a counteroffensive will not produce a militarily decisive outcome. Indeed, even major movement of the frontline will not necessarily end the conflict.

More broadly, interstate wars generally do not end when one side's forces are pushed beyond a certain point on the map. In other words, territorial conquest—or reconquest—is not in itself a form of war termination. The same will likely be true in Ukraine: even if Kyiv were successful beyond all expectations and forced Russian troops to retreat across the international border, Moscow would not necessarily stop fighting. But few in the West expect that outcome at any point, let alone in the near term. Instead, the optimistic expectation for the coming months is that the Ukrainians will make some gains in the south, perhaps retaking parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, or push back the Russian assault in the east.

Those potential gains would be important, and they are certainly desirable. Fewer Ukrainians would be subjected to the unspeakable horrors of Russian occupation. Kyiv might retake control of major economic assets, such as the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the largest in Europe. And Russia would have suffered another blow to its military capabilities and global prestige, further raising the costs of what has been a strategic catastrophe for Moscow.

The hope in Western capitals is that Kyiv's gains on the battlefield will then force Putin to the negotiating table. And it is possible that another tactical setback would diminish Moscow's optimism about continued fighting. But just as losing territorial control does not equate to losing a war, neither does it necessarily induce political concessions. Putin could announce another round of mobilization, intensify his bombing campaign on Ukraine's cities, or merely hold the line, convinced that time will work for him and against Ukraine. He might well continue fighting even if he thinks he will lose. Other states have chosen to keep fighting despite recognizing the inevitability of defeat: think, for example, of Germany in World War I. In short, gains on the battlefield will not in themselves necessarily bring about an end to the war.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE?

After over a year of fighting, the likely direction of this war is coming into focus. The location of the frontline is an important piece of that puzzle, but it is far from the most important one. Instead, the key

aspects of this conflict are twofold: the persistent threat that both sides will pose to each other, and the unsettled dispute over the areas of Ukraine that Russia has claimed to annex. These are likely to remain fixed for many years to come.

Ukraine has built an impressive fighting force with tens of billions of dollars' worth of aid, extensive training, and intelligence support from the West. The Ukrainian armed forces will be able to hold at risk any areas under Russian occupation. Further, Kyiv will maintain the capability to strike Russia itself, as it has demonstrated consistently over the past year.

Of course, the Russian military will also have the capacity to threaten Ukrainian security. Although its armed forces have suffered significant casualties and equipment losses that will take years to recover from, they are still formidable. And as they demonstrate daily, even in their current sorry state, they can cause significant death and destruction for Ukrainian military forces and civilians alike. The campaign to destroy Ukraine's power grid might have fizzled, but Moscow will maintain the ability to hit Ukraine's cities at any time using airpower, land-based assets, and sea-launched weapons.

In other words, no matter where the frontline is, Russia and Ukraine will have the capabilities to pose a permanent threat to each other. But the evidence of the past year suggests that neither has or will have the capacity to achieve a decisive victory—assuming, of course, that Russia does not resort to weapons of mass destruction (and even that might not secure victory). In early 2022, when its forces were in far better shape, Russia could not take control of Kyiv or oust the democratically elected Ukrainian government. At this stage, the Russian military even appears unable to take all the areas of Ukraine that Moscow claims as its own. Last November, the Ukrainians forced the Russians to retreat to the east bank of the Dnieper River in the Kherson region. Today, the Russian military is in no state to push back across the river to seize the rest of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Its attempt in January to push north on the plains of the Donetsk region near Vuhledar—a far less taxing offensive than a river crossing—ended in a bloodbath for the Russians.

The Ukrainian military, meanwhile, has defied expectations and may well continue to do so. But there are significant impediments to achieving further progress on the ground. Russian forces are heavily dug in on the most likely axis of advance in the south. Open-source satellite

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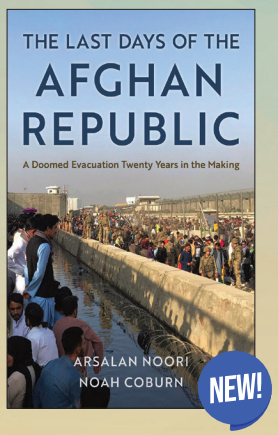

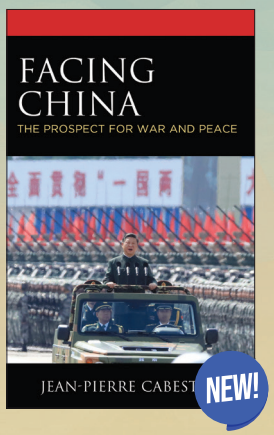

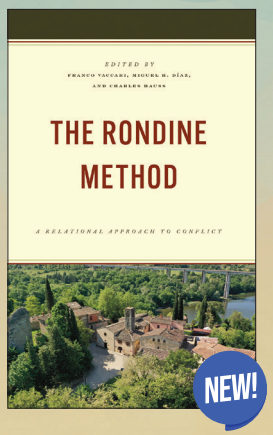

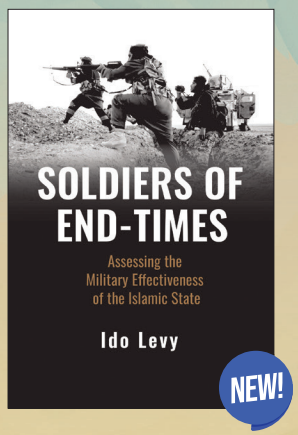

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images show they have created multilayered physical defenses—new trenches, antivehicle barriers, obstacles and revetments for equipment and materiel—across the frontline that will prove challenging to breach. The mobilization Putin announced last fall has ameliorated the manpower problems that had earlier allowed Ukraine to advance in the Kharkiv region, where Russia's thinly defended lines were vulnerable to a surprise attack. And the Ukrainian military is largely untested in offensive campaigns that require integrating various capabilities. It has also suffered significant losses during the war, most recently in the battle for Bakhmut, a small city in the Donetsk region. Kyiv is also facing shortages of critical munitions, including for artillery and air defenses, and the hodgepodge of Western equipment it received has strained maintenance and training resources.

These limitations on both sides strongly suggest that neither one will achieve its stated territorial objectives by military means in the coming months or even years. For Ukraine, the objective is extremely clear: Kyiv wants control over all its internationally recognized territory, which includes Crimea and the parts of the Donbas that Russia has occupied since 2014. Russia's position is not quite as categorical since Moscow has maintained ambiguity about the location of the borders of two of the five Ukrainian regions it claims to have annexed: Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Regardless of this ambiguity, the bottom line is that neither Ukraine nor Russia will likely establish control over what they consider their own territory. (This is not to suggest that both parties' claims should be accorded equal legitimacy. But the manifest illegitimacy of the Russian position does not appear to deter Moscow from holding it.) Put differently, the war will end without a resolution to the territorial dispute. Either Russia or Ukraine, or, more likely, both, will have to settle for a de facto line of control that neither recognizes as an international border.

A FOREVER WAR BEGINS

These largely immutable factors could well produce a drawn-out hot war between Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, history suggests that is the most likely outcome. A study from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, using data from 1946 to 2021 compiled by Uppsala University, found that 26 percent of interstate wars end in less than a month and another 25 percent within a year. But the study also found that "when interstate wars last longer than a year, they extend to over

a decade on average." Even those that last fewer than ten years can be exceptionally destructive. The Iran-Iraq war, for example, lasted for nearly eight years, from 1980 to 1988, and resulted in almost half a million combat fatalities and roughly as many wounded. After all its sacrifices, Ukraine deserves to avoid such a fate.

A long war between Russia and Ukraine will also be highly problematic for the United States and its allies, as a recent RAND study I co-authored with the political scientist Miranda Priebe shows. A protracted conflict would keep the risk of possible escalation—either to Russian nuclear use or to a Russian-NATO war—at its current elevated level. Ukraine would be on near-total economic and military life support from the West, which will eventually cause budgetary challenges for Western countries and readiness problems for their militaries. The global economic fallout of the war, including the volatility in grain and energy prices, would persist. The United States would be unable to focus its resources on other priorities, and Russian dependence on China would deepen. Although a long war would also further weaken Russia, that benefit does not outweigh these costs.

> Territorial conquest—or reconquest—is not in itself a form of war termination.

While Western governments should continue to do all they can to help Ukraine prepare for the counteroffensive, they also need to adopt a strategy for war termination—a vision for an endgame that is plausible under these far-from-ideal circumstances. Because a decisive military victory is highly unlikely, certain endgames are no longer plausible. Given the persistence of fundamental differences between Moscow and Kyiv on core issues such as borders, as well as intense grievances after so many casualties and civilian deaths, a peace treaty or comprehensive political settlement that normalizes relations between Russia and Ukraine seems impossible, too. The two countries will be enemies long after the hot war ends.

For Western governments and Kyiv, ending the war without any negotiations might seem preferable to talking to the representatives of a government that committed an unprovoked act of aggression and horrific war crimes. But interstate wars that have reached this level of intensity do not tend to simply peter out without negotiations. If the war persists, it will also be extremely difficult to transform it back into a low-intensity localized conflict like the one that took

LINE OF CONTACT

Where Russian and Ukrainian forces are facing off

Sources: Institute for the Study of War; OpenStreetMap.

place in the Donbas from 2014 to 2022. During that period, the war had a relatively minimal impact on life outside the conflict zone in Ukraine. The sheer length of the current frontline (over 600 miles), the strikes on cities and other targets far beyond the line, and the mobilization underway in both countries (partial in Russia, total in Ukraine) will have systemic—perhaps even near-existential—effects on the two belligerents. For example, it is difficult to imagine how the Ukrainian economy can recover if its airspace remains closed, its ports remain largely blockaded, its cities under fire, its men of working age fighting at the front, and millions of refugees unwilling to return to the country. We are past the point when the impact of this war can be confined to a particular geography.

Since talks will be needed but a settlement is out of the question, the most plausible ending is an armistice agreement. An armistice—essentially a durable cease-fire agreement that does not bridge political

divides—would end the hot war between Russia and Ukraine but not their broader conflict. The archetypal case is the 1953 Korean armistice, which dealt exclusively with the mechanics of maintaining a cease-fire and left all political issues off the table. Although North and South Korea are still technically at war, and both claim the entirety of the peninsula as their sovereign territory, the armistice has largely held. Such an unsatisfactory outcome is the most likely way this war will end.

In contrast with the Korean case, the United States and its allies are not doing the fighting in Ukraine. Decisions in Kyiv and Moscow will ultimately be far more determinative than those made in Berlin, Brussels, or Washington. Even if they wanted to do so, Western governments could not dictate terms to Ukraine—or to Russia. Yet even while acknowledging that Kyiv will ultimately make its own decisions, the United States and its allies, in close consultation with Ukraine, can begin to discuss and put forward their vision for the endgame. To some extent, they have already been doing so for months: U.S. President Joe Biden's May 2022 op-ed in *The New York Times* made clear that his administration sees this war ending at the negotiating table. His senior officials have regularly repeated this view ever since, although the language of helping Ukraine for "as long as it takes" often garners more attention. But Washington has steadfastly avoided providing any further details. Moreover, there do not appear to be any ongoing efforts either within the U.S. government or among Washington, its allies, and Kyiv to think through the practicalities and substance of eventual negotiations. Compared with the efforts to provide resources for the counteroffensive, practically nothing is being done to shape what comes next. The Biden administration should begin to fill that gap.

THE COSTS OF WAITING

Taking steps to get diplomacy off the ground need not affect efforts to assist Ukraine militarily or to impose costs on Russia. Historically, fighting and talking at the same time has been a common practice in wars. During the Korean War, some of the most intense fighting took place during the two years of armistice talks, when 45 percent of U.S. casualties were incurred. Beginning to plan for the inevitable diplomacy can and should occur in parallel with the other existing elements of U.S. policy—as well as with the ongoing war.

In the short term, that means both continuing to help Kyiv with the counteroffensive and beginning parallel discussions with allies

and Ukraine about the endgame. In principle, opening a negotiation track with Russia should complement, not contradict, the push on the battlefield. If Ukraine's gains make the Kremlin more willing to compromise, the only way to know that would be through a functioning diplomatic channel. Setting up such a channel should not cause either Ukraine or its Western partners to let up the pressure on Russia. An effective strategy will require both coercion and diplomacy. One cannot come at the expense of the other.

No matter where the frontline is, Russia and Ukraine will pose a permanent threat to each other.

And waiting to set the stage for negotiations has its costs. The longer the allies and Ukraine go without developing a diplomatic strategy, the harder it will be to do so. As the months go by, the political price of taking the first step will go up. Already, any move that the United States and its allies make to open the diplomatic track—even with Ukraine's support—would have to be delicately managed lest it be portrayed as a policy reversal or an abandonment of Western support for Kyiv.

Starting preparations now makes sense also because conflict diplomacy will not yield results overnight. Indeed, it will take weeks or perhaps months to get the allies and Ukraine on the same page about a negotiating strategy—and even longer to come to an agreement with Russia when the talks begin. In the case of the Korean armistice, 575 meetings were required over two years to finalize the nearly 40 pages of the agreement. In other words, even if a negotiation platform were set up tomorrow, months would elapse before the guns fell silent (if the talks were to succeed, which is far from a given).

Devising measures to make the cease-fire stick will be a thorny but critical task, and Washington should ensure that it is ready to assist Kyiv in that effort. Serious work should begin now on how to avoid what Ukrainian officials, including Zelensky, describe derisively as "Minsk 3," a reference to the two failed cease-fire deals that were brokered with Russia in the Belarusian capital in 2014 and 2015, after its earlier invasions. These agreements failed to durably end the violence and included no effective mechanisms for ensuring the parties' compliance.

Using data from conflicts between 1946 and 1997, the political scientist Virginia Page Fortna has shown that strong agreements

that arrange for demilitarized zones, third-party guarantees, peacekeeping, or joint commissions for dispute resolution and contain specific (versus vague) language produced more lasting cease-fires. These mechanisms reinforce the principles of reciprocity and deterrence that allow sworn enemies to achieve peace without resolving their fundamental differences. Because these mechanisms will be challenging to adapt to the Ukraine war, governments need to work on developing them now.

Although an armistice to end this war would be a bilateral agreement, the United States and its allies can and should assist Ukraine in its negotiating strategy. In addition, they should consider what measures they can take in parallel to provide incentives for the parties to get to the table and minimize the chances that any cease-fire collapses. As Fortna's research suggests, security commitments to Ukraine—some assurance that Kyiv will not face Russia alone if Moscow attacks again—should be part of this equation. Too often, the discussion of security commitments is reduced to the question of NATO membership for Ukraine. As a member, Ukraine would benefit from Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty, which requires members to consider an armed attack against one of them as an attack against them all. But NATO membership is more than just Article 5. From Moscow's perspective, membership in the alliance would transform Ukraine into a staging ground for the United States to deploy its own forces and capabilities. So even if there were consensus among allies to offer Kyiv membership (and there is not), granting Ukraine a security guarantee through NATO membership might well make peace so unattractive to Russia that Putin would decide to keep fighting.

Squaring this circle will be challenging and politically fraught. One potential model is the U.S.-Israel 1975 memorandum of understanding, which was one of the key preconditions for Israel to agree to peace with Egypt. The document states that in light of the "long-standing U.S. commitment to the survival and security of Israel, the United States Government will view with particular gravity threats to Israel's security or sovereignty by a world power." It goes on to say that in the event of such a threat, the U.S. government will consult with Israel "with respect to what support, diplomatic or otherwise, or assistance it can lend to Israel in accordance with its constitutional practices." The document also explicitly promises "remedial action by the United States" if Egypt violates the cease-fire.

This is not an explicit commitment to treat an attack on Israel as an attack on the United States, but it comes close.

A similar assurance to Ukraine would give Kyiv an enhanced sense of security, encourage private-sector investment in Ukraine's economy, and enhance deterrence of future Russian aggression. Whereas today Moscow knows for sure that the United States will not intervene militarily if it attacks Ukraine, this kind of statement would make the Kremlin think more than twice—but it would not raise the prospect of new U.S. bases on Russia's borders. Of course, Washington would need confidence in the durability of the cease-fire so that the probability of the commitment being tested would remain low. Avoiding war with Russia should remain a priority.

When the time comes, Ukraine will need other incentives such as reconstruction aid, measures of accountability for Russia, and sustained military assistance in peacetime to help Kyiv create a credible deterrent. In addition, the United States and its allies should supplement the coercive pressure being applied to Russia with efforts to make peace a more attractive option, such as conditional sanctions relief—with snapback clauses for noncompliance—that could prompt compromise. The West should also be open to a dialogue on broader European security issues so as to minimize the chance of a similar crisis with Russia breaking out in the future.

START TALKING

The first step toward making this vision a reality over the coming months is to stand up an effort in the U.S. government to develop the diplomatic track. An entire new U.S. military command element, the Security Assistance Group–Ukraine, has been devoted to the aid and training mission, which is led by a three-star general with a staff of 300. Yet there is not a single official in the U.S. government whose full-time job is conflict diplomacy. Biden should appoint one, perhaps a special presidential envoy who can engage beyond ministries of foreign affairs, which have been sidelined in this crisis in nearly all relevant capitals. Next, the United States should begin informal discussions with Ukraine and among allies in the G-7 and NATO about the endgame.

In parallel, the United States should consider establishing a regular channel of communication regarding the war that includes Ukraine, U.S. allies, and Russia. This channel would not initially be aimed at achieving a cease-fire. Instead, it would allow participants to interact continually,

instead of in one-off encounters, akin to the contact group model used during the Balkan wars, when an informal grouping of representatives from key states and international institutions met regularly. Such discussions should begin out of the public eye, as did initial U.S. contacts with Iran on the nuclear deal, signed in 2015.

These efforts might well fail to lead to an agreement. The odds of success are slim—and even if negotiations did produce a deal, no one would leave fully satisfied. The Korean armistice was certainly not seen as a triumph of U.S. foreign policy at the time it was signed: after all, the American public had grown accustomed to absolute victories, not bloody wars without clear resolution. But in the nearly 70 years since, there has not been another outbreak of war on the peninsula. Meanwhile, South Korea emerged from the devastation of the 1950s to become an economic powerhouse and eventually a thriving democracy. A postwar Ukraine that is similarly prosperous and democratic with a strong Western commitment to its security would represent a genuine strategic victory.

> Fighting and talking at the same time has been a common practice in wars.

An endgame premised on an armistice would leave Ukraine—at least temporarily—without all its territory. But the country would have the opportunity to recover economically, and the death and destruction would end. It would remain locked in a conflict with Russia over the areas occupied by Moscow, but that conflict would play out in the political, cultural, and economic domains, where, with Western support, Ukraine would have advantages. The successful reunification of Germany, in 1990, another country divided by terms of peace, demonstrates that focusing on nonmilitary elements of the contestation can produce results. Meanwhile, a Russian-Ukrainian armistice would also not end the West's confrontation with Russia, but the risks of a direct military clash would decrease dramatically, and the global consequences of the war would be mitigated.

Many commentators will continue to insist that this war must be decided only on the battlefield. But that view discounts how the war's structural realities are unlikely to change even if the frontline shifts, an outcome that itself is far from guaranteed. The United States and its allies should be capable of helping Ukraine simultaneously on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. Now is the time to start.

The Korea Model

Why an Armistice Offers the Best Hope for Peace in Ukraine

CARTER MALKASIAN

In the middle of August 1952, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai traveled nearly 4,000 miles to Moscow to meet with the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. Zhou was acting as an emissary for the leader of China, Mao Zedong. The two Communist powers were allies at the time, but it was not a partnership of equals: the Soviet Union was a superpower, and China depended on it for economic assistance and military equipment. Two years earlier, Mao and Stalin had embarked on a joint venture of sorts, giving their blessing to the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung when he invaded South Korea. Their hopes had been high; even though the United States immediately rushed to South Korea's aid, Stalin telegrammed Kim in the wake of the invasion to tell him that he had "no doubt that in the soonest time the interventionists will be driven out of Korea with ignominy."

CARTER MALKASIAN is Chair of the Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School and author of *The Korean War, 1950–1953*. From 2015 to 2019, he served as Special Assistant for Strategy to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The views expressed here are his own.

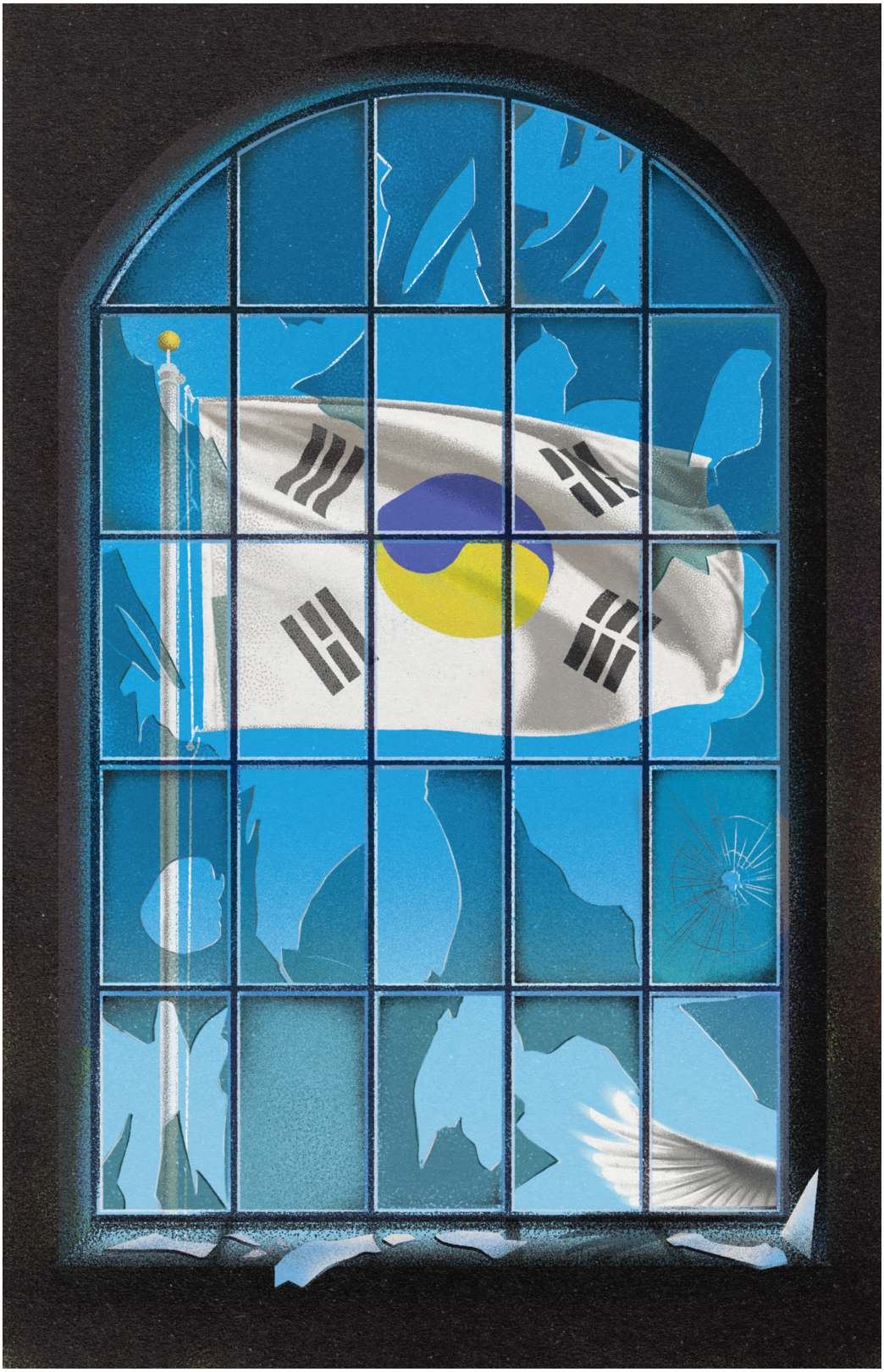

Illustration by Sam Green

Things had not gone according to plan. In the fall of 1950, as troops led by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur advanced through North Korea, China directly intervened. By the middle of 1951, a bloody stalemate had set in along the 38th parallel, the line that had delineated North from South Korea before the invasion. Negotiations between the opposing sides began in July of that year. Their purpose was to reach an armistice and set the stage for discussions about Korea's future. The talks had deadlocked, however, over the details of exchanging prisoners of war.

The Korean War never officially ended—but the armistice has held for 70 years.

When Zhou traveled to Moscow in the summer of 1952, the situation was looking grim for the Communists. Airstrikes had destroyed the North's industrial facilities and heavily damaged every city. Food was short. In February, Kim told Mao that he had "no desire to continue the war." Around five months later, Kim pleaded with Stalin to bring about "the soonest conclusion of an armistice." But Stalin did nothing. Like Stalin, Mao was determined to stand fast in the face of U.S. demands, and he was less worried than Kim was about the battlefield. Like Kim, however, Mao knew that his country was suffering.

Over the course of the Cold War, Zhou would earn a reputation as a cool diplomat. Yet arriving in Moscow as the bearer of bad news, he could not have been at ease. His task was to sound out Stalin's openness to a truce. Stalin had been behind the war, and it seemed reasonable to assume that talk of shutting it down would displease him.

The meeting took place on August 20. Stalin wanted to know if the Chinese and North Koreans could increase the military pressure on the United States. Zhou expressed confidence that "both sides are about equal in strength" but noted that a Chinese "general offensive would be difficult to carry out." In other words, there were no good military options for coercing the United States. To exude confidence, Zhou reassured Stalin that "Mao believes that the continuation of the war is advantageous to us, since it [distracts] America from preparing for a new world war."

"Mao Zedong is right," Stalin affirmed, according to Russian archival documents. "This war is getting on America's nerves. The North Koreans have lost nothing, except for casualties. . . . [The] Americans understand that this war is not advantageous and they

will have to end it. . . . Endurance and patience [are] needed here." Zhou praised "the truth of comrade Stalin's observations." Then he tried again. The North Koreans are "wavering somewhat," he said. "They are in a slightly unsteady state. Among certain elements of the Korean leadership one can detect a state of panic, even." This seemed to annoy Stalin, who replied that he had been "already informed of these feelings." Zhou backed off.

A month later, Zhou broached again with Stalin the possibility of accepting a cease-fire and putting off contentious details regarding prisoner exchanges. Stalin dismissed the idea as "one of [several] possible scenarios, but America is not likely to agree to it." It was clear that Stalin wanted the Chinese and North Koreans to press on and forgo compromise. Zhou was left with little choice but to assent to Stalin's counsel, which he praised as "valuable instructions."

The fighting would rage for another ten months before the two sides would agree to an armistice, albeit on terms that were slightly worse for China and the Soviet Union than those that Zhou and Stalin had discussed. During that time, tens of thousands died, and tens of thousands more were wounded. Ultimately, 36,574 Americans were killed in the war and 103,284 were wounded. China lost an estimated one million people, and four million Koreans perished—ten percent of the peninsula's population.

The armistice ended that bloodshed, establishing a demilitarized zone and mechanisms to supervise compliance and mediate violations. But the Korean War did not officially conclude. The major political issues could not be settled, and skirmishes, raids, artillery shelling, and occasional battles broke out. They never escalated to full-blown war, however. The armistice held—and 70 years later, it still holds.

Today, the Korean Peninsula remains a site of high geopolitical tension. North Korea is governed by a dictator who brutally represses his citizens and regularly threatens his neighbors with nuclear weapons. But the carnage of the Korean War is now a distant memory, and the peace produced by the armistice allowed South Korea to develop a robust economy and, eventually, a stable liberal democracy. For all its flaws, the armistice was a success.

The war ravaging Ukraine today bears more than a passing resemblance to the Korean War. And for anyone wondering about how it might end, the durability of the Korean armistice—and the high human cost of the delay in reaching it—deserves close study.

The parallels are clear. In Ukraine, as in Korea seven decades ago, a static battlefront and intractable political differences call for a cease-fire that would pause the violence while putting off thorny political issues for another day. The Korean armistice "enabled South Korea to flourish under American security guarantees and protection," the historian Stephen Kotkin has pointed out. "If a similar armistice allowed Ukraine—or even just 80 percent of the country—to flourish in a similar way," he argues, "that would be a victory in the war."

The negotiations that produced the Korean armistice were long and difficult and took place alongside heavy fighting, before the war's costs were clear enough to persuade either side to compromise. The same would likely be true today. The Korean experience also suggests that the obstinacy of Russian President Vladimir Putin—who, like Stalin, seems averse to compromise of any kind—could be especially obstructive. On top of that, domestic politics in the United States and the gap between Washington's and Kyiv's legitimate but distinct interests could trip up a cease-fire.

At the moment, debate in Washington often focuses on the question of when would be the right time to start pushing Ukraine to negotiate, and the consensus answer has generally been, "Not yet." The Korean War shows that, in a military stalemate, it can take a very long time for both sides to clearly see that the costs of continuing to fight are outweighing the benefits. And by the time they do, a great deal of death and destruction can occur without producing any meaningful advantages.

If the United States, NATO, and other supporters of Ukraine do decide to work toward a cease-fire, the end of the Korean War offers three practical lessons. First, they must be willing to fight and talk simultaneously, using battlefield pressure to enforce demands at the negotiating table. Second, they should include the United Nations in any negotiations, since neutral arbiters are an asset. Finally, they should condition future security assistance and postconflict support for Ukraine on Kyiv's willingness to make some concessions.

A complete victory for Ukraine and the West and a total defeat for the other side would be a welcome end to the Ukraine war, just as it would have been in Korea. And as in Korea, the risk of escalation confounds such an outcome. Kyiv, Washington, and their partners in opposing Moscow's aggression should understand that an armistice that both Ukraine and Russia can accept—even if it fails to settle all the important questions—would still be a win.

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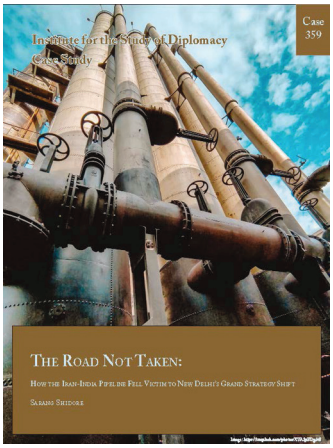

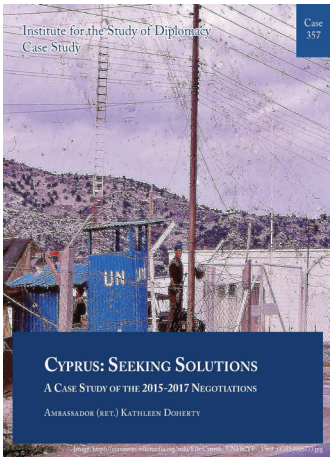

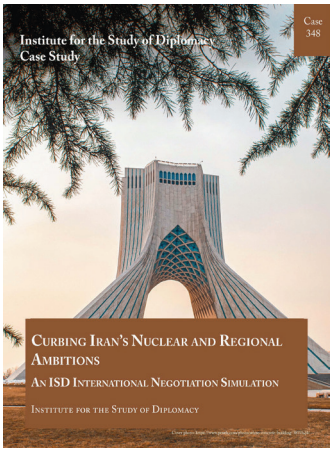

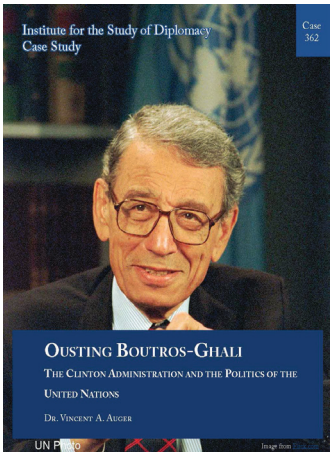

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FIGHTING AND TALKING

North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. Two days later, the UN authorized the United States and 14 of its allies and partners (collectively known as the UN Command) to enter the war on South Korea's side. For the first five months of the war, neither side sought negotiations.

The presence of American forces in combat so close to China concerned Mao. In August, he told the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), "If the U.S. imperialists won the war, they would become more arrogant and would threaten us. We should not fail to assist the Koreans. We must lend them our hands in the form of sending our military volunteers there." In October, Mao made the fateful decision to send some 300,000 soldiers across the Yalu River to meet the advancing Americans.

The Chinese offensive routed MacArthur's forces. Suddenly, all of Korea was in danger of falling to the Communists. MacArthur called for direct military action against China, not excluding the use of atomic weapons. U.S. President Harry Truman feared MacArthur might trigger a general war with the Soviet Union, which was by then a nuclear power. His team pieced together an alternative. In a joint communiqué issued in December 1950, Truman and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee called for cease-fire negotiations and assured the world that the American side would not use atomic weapons. Meanwhile, U.S. General Matthew Ridgway applied military pressure to coerce the Communists into negotiations while refraining from actions that could cause escalation, such as bombing China, launching operations deep inside North Korean territory, or capturing the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. The United States adhered to the main points of this strategy for the rest of the war.

The Communist side rejected U.S. and UN proposals for negotiations, and heavy fighting marked the first six months of 1951. Eventually, Ridgway's forces recaptured all of South Korea. Despite the Communists' best efforts, they could not advance farther south. The severe defeat of China's so-called Fifth Phase Offensive, the largest battle of the war, proved to Mao and Stalin that a decisive victory would be impossible. After behind-the-scenes discussions with the American diplomat George Kennan, Jakob Malik, the Soviet representative to the UN, publicly called for a cease-fire and an armistice on June 23.

The talks began on July 10. Three main issues were at hand: the location of a cease-fire line, measures to supervise compliance, and the exchange of prisoners of war. Negotiations on the first issue proceeded slowly. The Communists wanted the 38th parallel to serve as the cease-fire line. The United States, on the other hand, preferred the frontline (or "line of contact"), which was slightly north of the parallel, where the rugged terrain was easier to defend. On November 27, after four months of fighting and talking, the two sides agreed that the line of contact would become the cease-fire line.

Biden will face an array of attacks on his Ukraine policy.

By the following spring, they had also reached an agreement on mechanisms for supervising the cease-fire. But no headway had been made on the question of how to exchange prisoners of war. Truman demanded voluntary repatriation, meaning that the roughly 170,000 Communist prisoners of war would be free to return to their home countries or seek residence in a different country. The United States claimed that if given such a choice, some 100,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners would elect not to return home. For Mao and Stalin, such a mass defection would undermine the idea that communism would produce a utopia that no rational person would ever willingly leave. In October, after months of deadlock, U.S. General Mark Clark, Ridgway's successor, recessed the negotiations indefinitely.

Dwight Eisenhower was elected U.S. president the following month. When he took office, he and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, publicly and privately signaled that they were willing to escalate into a more destructive war, seeking to convince the Communists that further fighting was not worthwhile.

The pause in negotiations and the election of Eisenhower worried many UN members states and U.S. allies, including Canada and the United Kingdom, that feared the war might escalate. Debates at the UN led to a resolution written by the Indian diplomat V. K. Krishna Menon proposing a repatriation commission of neutral countries—Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland—to facilitate the return of prisoners after an armistice. Hoping to avoid a rupture with its key allies, the United States grudgingly went along. The idea would soon become the basis of a compromise.

In March 1953, Stalin died, and Soviet and Chinese leaders immediately adopted a softer line on the talks. On April 26, negotiations resumed.

In early May, the Soviets and the Chinese cribbed from India's UN resolution and introduced the neutral nations repatriation commission on their own. Unfortunately, quibbling over minor details dragged things out, and the violence escalated. The United States intensified its air war on North Korea, and in May, Eisenhower approved a directive that outlined options for a further U.S. advance into North Korea, the bombing of Chinese air bases in Manchuria, and the use of atomic weapons if talks went nowhere.

On May 25, 1953, the U.S. delegation presented its final position, which accepted the establishment of a repatriation commission with some minor adjustments. If the Communists rejected the terms, Clark was authorized to ramp up military action. In a series of communications with officials in China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union, U.S. leaders including Dulles and Clark conveyed Washington's willingness to escalate the war and possibly use atomic weapons.

The Communists agreed to the final position on June 4. Yet it was not over: South Korean President Syngman Rhee was not on board. About two weeks later, Rhee unilaterally released around 27,000 North Korean prisoners of war, upending the entire process. The Communists retaliated with their largest attack in two years. Some 30,000 South Korean soldiers were killed—a toll that, along with pressure and incentives from Washington, got Rhee to comply. At last, the armistice was signed on July 27.

BOXED IN

As Washington and its partners weigh the prospect of negotiations to end the war in Ukraine, they ought to be mindful of the heavy toll that a delay in reaching an armistice produced in South Korea. An outcome that essentially ratified the territorial status quo when negotiations began required threats of nuclear escalation and two years of intense fighting that inflicted more than 150,000 casualties on the United States, its allies, and South Korea and over 250,000 casualties on the Chinese and North Korean side.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the delay was that the Communists simply took too long to appreciate the true costs of the war and to realize that they could not outlast the United States. Whereas the debacle near the Yalu River in November 1950 had convinced Truman and other Western leaders to pursue negotiations, it had convinced Mao and Stalin that they could win the war outright.

As the historians Shen Zhihua and Yafeng Xia have written, Mao had originally wanted to "localize the war" and simply defend China. The rout of the U.S.-led Eighth Army emboldened him to raise his sights, and he decided that China's military strength would allow him to drive the United States off the Korean Peninsula, end U.S. support for Taiwan, and secure China's entry to the UN. It took six months of heavy attrition in which roughly 150,000 were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner on the Communist side for Mao to realize that such ambitions were unrealistic and to seek an armistice based on the prewar status quo. By mid-June of 1951, Stalin had concurred.

Even then, however, Mao and Stalin were intent on using continued military action to gain leverage at the negotiating table before agreeing to a cease-fire. Given China's massive advantage in manpower, they reckoned that the United States could never defeat China in a war of attrition. "Only by adopting an unyielding position can you win the initiative and force the enemy to yield," Mao explained to one of his negotiators. "To achieve these objectives, you should prepare for a test of strength against the enemy through several more months of negotiations."

The Communist side failed that test. First, a series of hard-hitting U.S., British, and Australian attacks compelled Mao to accept the line of contact as the cease-fire line in the fall of 1951. Then, after Mao and Stalin resisted concessions on prisoner exchanges, Clark subjected Communist forces to an intensified air campaign in 1952, striking targets in Pyongyang and hydroelectric plants that provided power to North Korea and much of Manchuria.

According to the historian Shu Guang Zhang, by the latter half of 1952, the war was absorbing roughly 50 percent of China's revenues. Mao had already raised taxes and had requested a loan from the Soviet Union, to which China was heavily in debt. In August, Mao informed officials at a CCP meeting that the Chinese economy would collapse unless they halved war expenditures. The drain on the state's coffers was delaying China's full transition to a socialist economy, and Mao and the party fretted about internal dissent.

Though less worried than Kim, Mao had to weigh these economic and political concerns in considering a cease-fire. He did not want to break China, but he also did not want the CCP to appear weak as it consolidated power internally just three years after winning the Chinese Civil War. Mao was in a bind, which is why he sent Zhou to Moscow in August 1952.

Stalin wasn't interested in helping Mao get out of a jam. He wanted only to preserve Soviet military capabilities, use China and North Korea to degrade U.S. military and economic strength, and avoid making any hasty concessions. From his viewpoint, North Korean and Chinese casualties were tolerable. Only when Stalin died in March 1953 did the Soviet position soften. Stalin's successor, Georgy Malenkov, and other senior Soviet leaders (including Nikita Khrushchev) sought "peaceful coexistence" with the United States—continued competition, but with less tension and a lower risk of direct conflict. For them, the costs of continuing to fight over Korea seemed too high.

Yet to dwell on Stalin misses another reason that the war did not end earlier. The negotiations were hung up for 18 months by the U.S. demand that prisoners of war get to choose whether to be repatriated—a position driven by an ideological desire to show that communism held less appeal than democracy, and by domestic political pressure to look tough. For Truman, voluntary repatriation was an inalienable human right. In May 1952, he declared that forcible repatriation would be "repugnant to our most fundamental moral and humanitarian principles." The policy received robust bipartisan support, as fierce anticommunism defined U.S. political culture at the time.

When the issue bogged down negotiations, Truman could not backtrack without facing accusations of weakness against communism during an election year. Later on, Eisenhower also worried that right-wing Republicans would cast any wavering on the issue as going soft. If Truman had never made the demand in the first place, the Communists might have agreed to a cease-fire much earlier, possibly before Stalin's death. Put bluntly, two U.S. presidents ended up allowing thousands of U.S. soldiers to die not in service of any particular territorial goal or tactical advantage but to avoid domestic political backlash.

The South Koreans had a hand in delaying the armistice, as well. The entire agreement nearly fell apart after Rhee's preemptive prisoner release. Rhee's interests diverged from those of the United States. He wanted Korea unified under his government and had conceded only grudgingly to negotiations in 1951. Rhee also wanted a mutual security treaty with the United States that he hoped would deter the Communists from trying to overwhelm his forces at some future date. Washington had initially demurred; its defense priority

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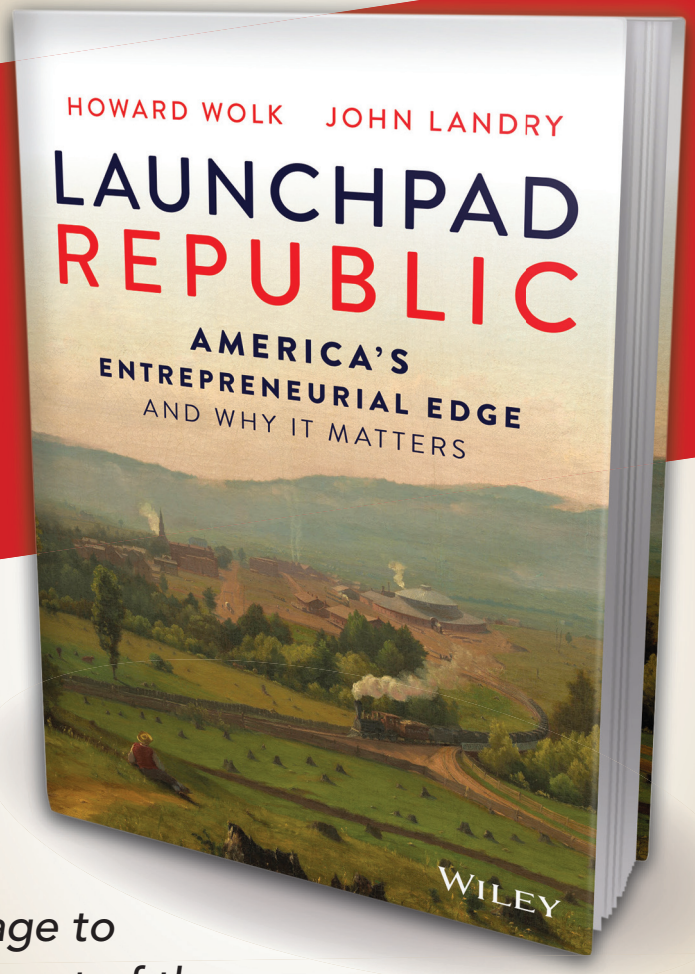

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in the region was securing Japan. So rather than passively accept the armistice, Rhee sought to undermine it. Even in the wake of China's retaliation, Washington obtained Rhee's cooperation only by promising to expand South Korea's military, grant the country long-term economic assistance, and sign the mutual security treaty it had previously rejected. And Rhee never signed the armistice agreement: Washington just had to accept his word that he would abide by its terms.

A HARD ROAD TO PEACE

Today, as during the Korean War, an independent state is bearing the brunt of an act of aggression, and the ruler on the other side is bent on winning. As during the Korean War, great powers are center stage and nuclear weapons lurk in the background. And as during the Korean War, neither side seems likely to deliver a knockout blow on the battlefield, and neither side seems interested in pursuing a comprehensive peace deal.

Given the similarities, some of the same pitfalls that delayed the Korean armistice could hamper efforts to forge one in Ukraine. As in Korea, it might take a prolonged period of fighting to convince the parties to start negotiating. Putin, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and Western leaders may wait to talk out of a belief that the battlefield situation will improve or that the other side may break. If negotiations began, that problem would persist. Either side might hope that an improvement in its battlefield fortunes could lead to a better deal, such as a slightly more advantageous cease-fire line or supervisory arrangement.

Another roadblock would emerge if Putin adopted a position similar to the one that Stalin held in 1952. Putin appears committed to dismantling an independent, democratic Ukraine and averse to losing any of the Ukrainian territory that his forces have seized since 2014. High battlefield costs may be insufficient to overcome his will. What is more, the possible domestic political costs of making any concessions might further steel his resolve, regardless of the economic and human costs. Even if Putin lets negotiations begin, he may refuse compromise and use stalling tactics to wring concessions out of Ukraine, the United States, and NATO.

U.S. domestic politics could also complicate negotiations, as they did during the Korean War. No matter what approach he takes, U.S.

President Joe Biden will face an array of attacks on his Ukraine policy as the 2024 election approaches, especially if negotiations start in the coming months. Some "America first" Republicans will complain that continued support for Kyiv is wasteful and reckless. Other Republicans will decry any compromise with Russia as weakness—as will some Democrats. It is easy to see how an armistice could draw domestic criticism if, for example, the text does not recognize an independent and democratic Ukraine, restricts the freedom of navigation for Ukrainian exports through the Black Sea, or leaves Crimea or parts of the Donbas region under Russian occupation.

Meanwhile, Ukraine should not be expected to toe the Western line. As Eisenhower learned in dealing with Rhee—and as subsequent U.S. presidents discovered in dealing with leaders in South Vietnam and Afghanistan—a junior partner rarely does whatever Washington wants. Zelensky might resist pressure that the United States puts on him. His interests diverge in important ways from those of the United States and NATO, and so might his strategy. He has long refused to cede any of Ukraine's territory under Russian occupation, including Crimea and the Donbas. Concessions on those areas could affect his future electoral prospects. Indeed, a cease-fire could leave Ukraine in a far worse strategic position, with lost territory, constricted access to the Black Sea, and an ambiguous security relationship with NATO. Under those circumstances, Zelensky may prove even harder to budge than Rhee was. Furthermore, the United States and its allies have less leverage over Ukraine than they did over South Korea. There are no U.S. military units on the ground; Ukrainians themselves are doing all the fighting and dying. And an alliance guarantee for Ukraine would be controversial. Whereas Eisenhower could easily offer an alliance to South Korea, a U.S. president today would face opposition from some NATO members.

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

Given all the potential obstacles to an armistice in Ukraine, some might argue that the more realistic option would be to wait for the conflict to freeze, as did the fighting in eastern Ukraine after Russia's 2014 invasion. A stalemate along the frontline could settle in, and violence could descend to a bearable, steady state. The problem is that a frozen conflict would buy Russia time to eventually return to

full-scale war. Putin could wait for his position to improve and then launch another offensive. For that reason, an armistice featuring a signed document, international mediation, an agreed-on cease-fire line, supervisory mechanisms, and enforcement measures remains the least bad option.

There are a number of things that Washington and its partners can do to improve the odds of an armistice. First, diplomats should tightly integrate their bargaining with the use of military force: the idea is to fight and talk, not wish for Russian goodwill. A cease-fire in Ukraine would depend on sustaining military and economic pressure on Russia. The United States, NATO, and Ukraine should offer to start negotiations but keep up pressure on the battlefield and other fronts—for example, sanctions—until the Kremlin comes around. That is what Truman did when faced with Communist intransigence in Korea in late 1950 and early 1951. If Russia continues to reject negotiations, Washington and NATO could make the costs of stalling clear to Putin by giving Ukraine more equipment (such as ATACM missiles, tanks, fighter aircraft, and air defense systems) and by deploying special operations forces to Ukraine in a noncombat role. Once negotiations did begin, limited Ukrainian attacks could be coordinated with demands at the bargaining table. At the same time, security and economic assistance to Ukraine could be increased. In 2022, the United States contributed roughly $77 billion and the rest of NATO, $63 billion. They should expect to have to contribute at least the same amounts per year until a cease-fire occurs.

Ukraine should not be expected to toe the Western line.

In setting up and carrying out negotiations, the United States and NATO should include the UN. Conventional wisdom in Washington today is that the UN is an ineffective diplomatic tool. Dulles mistakenly thought the same thing in 1953, but the organization's mediation wound up playing a crucial role in the Korean armistice. Today, Russia may find it easier to accept ideas for compromise that come from neutral or friendly countries at the UN than proposals that come from the United States, NATO, or Ukraine. The fact that important members such as India have stood on the sidelines enhances the organization's credibility in supervising and inspecting cease-fire arrangements.

To coax Zelensky toward a compromise, Washington and European governments should closely consult with him in designing the negotiations and ensure that his representatives play a central role in any talks. More important, they should condition postconflict security and economic assistance on Ukraine's willingness to make concessions. Kyiv is certain to want security guarantees as part of any deal. Although NATO membership is unlikely anytime soon, U.S. and NATO diplomats would be wise to start exploring other kinds of assurances, such as long-term commitments to advise and train Ukrainian forces.

There are fewer options to address the single biggest obstacle to talks: Putin. His obstinacy may be insurmountable. The United States and NATO have no good levers to pull if Putin is truly insensitive to the costs of war. Targeting Russian elites with sanctions and supporting Russian opposition movements are superficially appealing. But Washington and its allies have too little access to Russia and too poor an understanding of the country's political dynamics to bet on success. Hopes that Putin might be deposed seem even more far-fetched. It is worth remembering that Stalin's intransigence ceased to impede talks in Korea only when he died. Since Putin probably cannot be ousted and probably will not die soon, pursuing negotiations is a gamble that he will cave at some point to military and economic pressure.

Thus, there is no guarantee that talks will occur or result in an armistice. Russia may be resolved to outlast the United States and NATO. Washington should bear in mind that its stakes in Ukraine are lower than its stakes were in Korea. It is hard to imagine that any American president would commit U.S. forces to fight alongside Ukrainian ones. Nor would Washington enable Ukraine to levy the degree of destruction on Russia that the United States visited on North Korea: breaking dams, knocking out power stations, bombing the capital. Just because negotiations were successful in Korea does not mean history will repeat itself.

Yet if pursuing negotiations is a gamble, it is one with low risks and high potential rewards. Failure would merely yield the same result as doing nothing. Success, however, could preserve Ukraine, allay wider fears for democracy, deter further Russian aggression, and put fears of escalation to rest. The kind of stable, durable peace the Korean armistice produced would be a victory not just for Ukraine and its supporters but for the entire world, as well.

How Wars Don't End

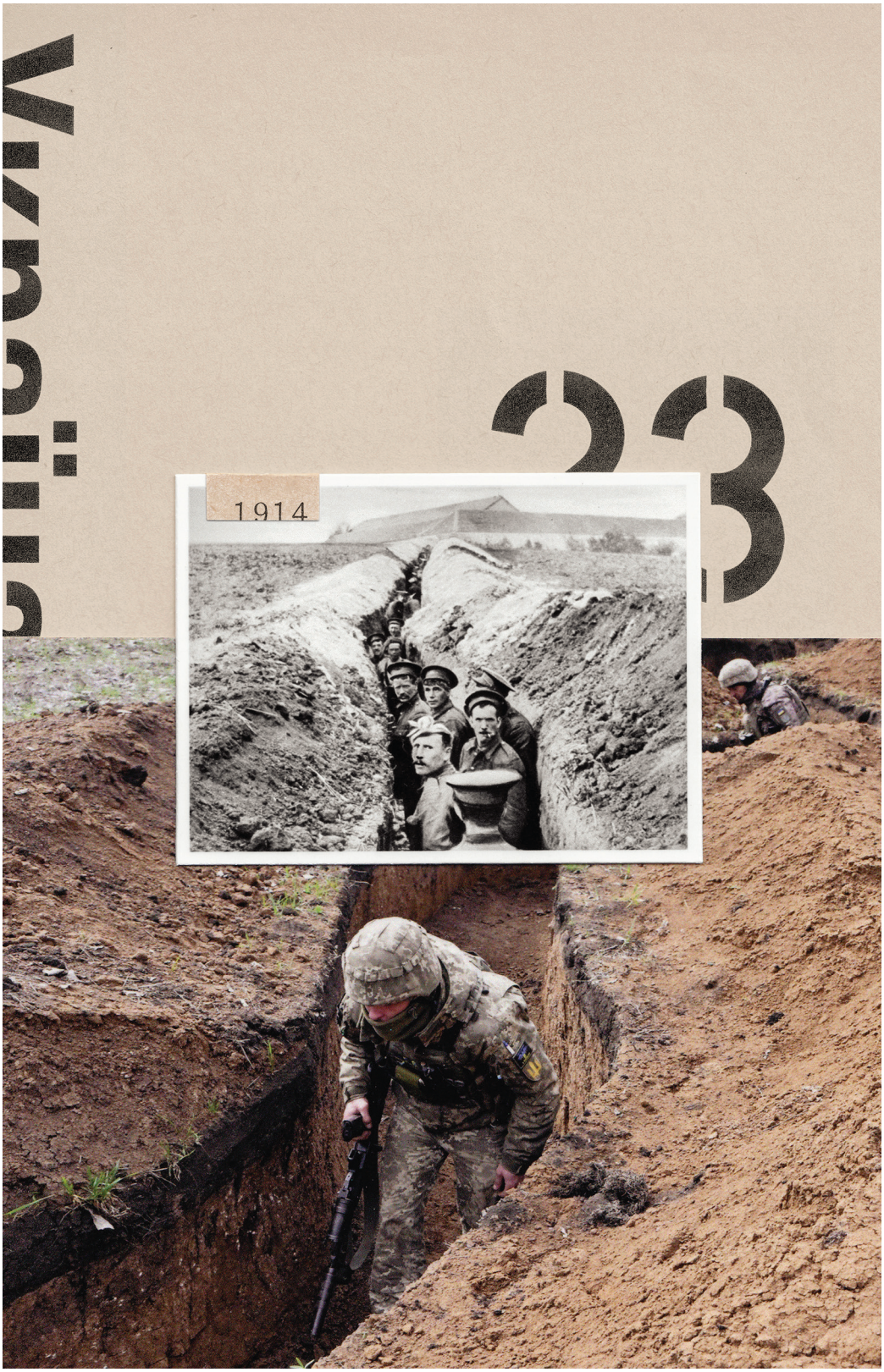
Ukraine, Russia, and the Lessons of World War I

MARGARET MACMILLAN

On February 24, 2022, the great Ukrainian novelist Andrey Kurkov and his wife were awakened in their home in Kyiv by the sound of Russian missiles. At first, he could not believe what was happening. "You have to get used psychologically to the idea that war has begun," he wrote. Many observers of the invasion felt and continue to feel that sense of disbelief. They were confounded by Russia's open and massive assault and amazed at Ukraine's dogged and successful resistance. Who, in those first days of the war, as the Russian columns advanced, would have predicted that the two sides would still be fighting well over a year later? With so many more weapons and resources and so much more manpower to draw on, it seemed a foregone conclusion that Russia would crush Ukraine and seize its main cities in a matter of days.

Yet well into its second year, the war goes on, and in a very different way than expected. An invasion of Ukraine, many assumed, would

MARGARET MACMILLAN is Professor Emeritus of International History at Oxford and the author of *War: How Conflict Shaped Us* and *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914*.



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involve rapid advances and decisive battles. There has been some of that, including Ukraine's dramatic counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region in the late summer of 2022. But by early May, despite talk of a major Ukrainian offensive, the war had long since become a grinding conflict along increasingly fortified battle lines. Indeed, the scenes coming from eastern Ukraine—soldiers knee-deep in mud, the two sides facing each other from trenches and ruined buildings across a wasteland churned up by shells—could be from the western front in 1916 or Stalingrad in 1942.

Leaders are rarely mere machines tabulating the costs and benefits of war.

Before the Russian invasion, many assumed that wars among major twenty-first-century powers, if they happened at all, would not be like earlier ones. They would be fought using a new generation of advanced technologies, including autonomous weapons systems. They would play out in space and cyberspace; boots on the ground would probably not matter much. Instead, the West has had to come to terms with another state-to-state war on European soil, fought by large armies over many square miles of territory. And that is only one of many ways that Russia's invasion of Ukraine harks back to the two world wars. Like those earlier wars, it was fueled by nationalism and unrealistic assumptions about how easy it would be to overwhelm the enemy. The fighting has taken place in civilian areas as much as on the battlefield, laying waste to towns and villages and sending populations fleeing. It has consumed vast resources, and the governments involved have been forced to use conscripts and, in the case of Russia, mercenaries. The conflict has led to a search for new and more deadly weapons and carries the potential for dangerous escalation. It is also drawing in many other countries.

The experience of an earlier great war in Europe—we know it as World War I—should remind us of the dreadful costs of a prolonged and bitter armed conflict. And like today, that war was widely expected to be short and decisive. Yet the world, and Ukraine, now face disquieting questions. How long will Russia persist with its campaign, even though its hopes of celebrating victory continue to recede? What greater damage and horrors will be inflicted on Ukraine and its people? And when can those countries most affected by the conflict, from Ukraine's neighbors to the wider membership of NATO, stop worrying that the war will spill outside Ukraine's borders? But the past also

offers an even darker warning—this time, for the future, when the war in Ukraine finally comes to an end, as all wars do. Ukraine and its supporters may well hope for an overwhelming victory and the fall of the Putin regime. Yet if Russia is left in turmoil, bitter and isolated, with many of its leaders and people blaming others for its failures, as so many Germans did in those interwar decades, then the end of one war could simply lay the groundwork for another.

SARAJEVO SYNDROME

In the spring of 1914, few thought that a land war between major European powers was possible. European states, so their inhabitants complacently assumed, were too advanced, too economically integrated—too "civilized," in the language of the time—to resort to armed conflict with each other. Wars still took place on the periphery of Europe, in the Balkans notably or in colonial territories, where Europeans fought against less powerful peoples—but not, it was thought, on the continent itself.

Much the same held true in the early weeks of 2022. Leaders and policymakers and their publics in the West tended to view warfare as something that happened elsewhere, whether in the form of insurrections against unpopular governments or in the seemingly endless conflicts in failed states. True, there were concerns about major-power conflict when, say, China and India clashed along their common border or when China and the United States traded barbs over the fate of Taiwan. But to those in the more fortunate parts of the world—the Americas, Europe, much of Asia and the Pacific—wars were a thing of the past or far away.

In 1914 and 2022 alike, those who assumed war wasn't possible were wrong. In 1914, there were dangerous and unresolved tensions among the European powers, as well as a new arms race and regional crises, which had led to talk of war. Similarly, in the months leading up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moscow had made clear its grievances with the West, and Russian President Vladimir Putin had given many indications of his intentions. Rather than rely on assumptions about the unlikelihood of a full-scale war, Western leaders who doubted the prospect of a Russian invasion should have paid more attention to his rhetoric about Ukraine. The title of the lengthy essay Putin published in 2021 said it all: "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Not only was Ukraine the birthplace of Russia itself, he argued,

but its peoples have always been Russian. In his view, malign outside forces—Austria-Hungary before World War I and the European Union today—had tried to divide Russia from its rightful patrimony.

Putin also echoed early-twentieth-century leaders in concluding that war was a reasonable option. Following a Serbian nationalist's assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914, the rulers of Austria-Hungary quickly convinced themselves that they had to destroy Serbia, even if it meant a war with Serbia's protector, Russia. Tsar Nicholas II was still smarting from the humiliation he had been dealt when Austria-Hungry annexed Bosnia from the Ottoman Empire in 1908, and he vowed he would never back down again. German Kaiser Wilhelm II, commanding the world's most powerful army, was afraid of appearing cowardly. Each of these leaders, in different ways, felt that a quick and decisive war offered the best way to reinvigorate their countries. Similarly, Putin resented Moscow's loss of power after the Cold War and was convinced he would quickly overwhelm Ukraine. And he confronted leaders in Europe and the United States who had their minds on other things, just as a century earlier, when the crisis erupted on the continent, the British government was preoccupied with trouble in Ireland.

Equally dangerous was the aggressors' assumption that a war would be short and decisive. In 1914, the major powers had only offensive war plans, predicated on quick victories. Germany's notorious Schlieffen Plan imagined a two-front war against France and its ally Russia. The German army would fight a holding action in the east, where Germany and Russia then shared a common border. And Germany would launch a massive attack in the West, swooping down through Belgium and northern France to encircle Paris—all within six weeks, at which point, the Germans assumed, France would surrender, and Russia would sue for peace. In 2022, Putin made much the same mistake. So convinced was he of Russia's ability to rapidly conquer Ukraine that he had a puppet government in waiting and ordered his soldiers to bring along their dress uniforms for a victory parade. And like imperial Germany a century earlier, Russia paid little heed to the potentially catastrophic costs if things did not go as planned.

Leaders with the power to take their countries into war—or hold them back—can rarely be considered mere machines tabulating costs and benefits. If Putin had made the proper calculations at the beginning, he would probably not have invaded Ukraine, or at least he would

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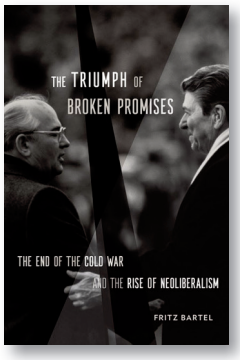

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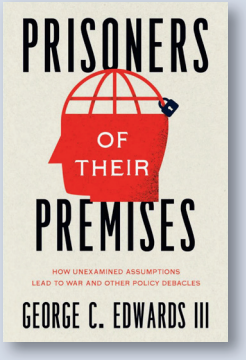

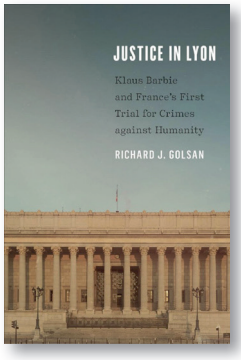

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Klaus Barbie was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews and Resistance fighters during World War II and after the war a US intelligence operative. The trial was a major international event attracting hundreds of journals and spectators from around the world. This book is the first complete account of the historic trial in Lyon, France and uses previously unavailable sources to reveal the trial's impact on French history and law.

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have tried to extricate Russian forces as soon as it became clear that he would not get the rapid, cheap conquest he expected. Emotions—resentment, pride, fear—can influence decisions great and small, and as 1914 showed, so can the experiences of those making the decisions. Like Nicholas, Putin remembered a humiliation. As a young KGB officer, he had witnessed firsthand the Soviet empire's retreat from East Germany and then the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself, and he saw the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU—both of which had started under his predecessors Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin—as an indignity and a threat. The West downplayed Russia's fears and largely ignored the blows to its national pride.

In 1914, Europe's elites shared a common culture, often spoke the same languages, and were connected by ties of friendship and marriage. Yet they failed to grasp the strength of nationalism, the growing antipathies between often neighboring peoples, and the way their ruling classes and intellectuals were abusing history to claim that, for example, the Germans and the French were hereditary enemies. Today, for Putin and the many Russians who see things the way he does, the West, however defined, is the enemy and always has been. Ukraine was being seduced by Western materialism and decadence and needed to be saved and restored to its proper family. And another motive was in play: if liberalism and democracy took root in Ukraine, as appeared to be happening, those dangerous forces might start to infect Russian society, too. Before the invasion, few in the West understood the extent to which Putin saw Ukraine as central to Russia's destiny.

One of the lessons of Russia's war in Ukraine is that Western strategists need to pay more attention to how leaders elsewhere see their own countries and histories. For example, invading Taiwan would carry all sorts of risks for China. But the Chinese may be prepared to take them. Their leader, Xi Jinping, has made it clear that he views the island and its people as part of the Chinese nation and wants "reunification" to be part of his legacy. That view and that desire must factor heavily into Xi's decision-making.

THE FAST-WAR FALLACY

As World War I indelibly demonstrated, wars rarely go as planned. Military strategists were aware of the growing importance of trench warfare and rapid-firing artillery, yet they failed to see the consequences. They were unprepared for what quickly became static frontlines, in which

the opposing sides carried out massive exchanges of artillery and machine-gun fire from fortified trenches—tactics that led to very high casualty rates with minimal advances. A war that was meant to be over in months ground on for more than four years and cost far more in human lives and economic resources than anyone had imagined at the outset.

Although the war in Ukraine is only in its second year, it, too, has unfolded, for months-long stretches, in a situation of hardening frontlines with very high human costs. Such a reality does not preclude the possibility of significant new operations by either side and consequent shifts in momentum. Well over a year into the war, advances are likely to come at a much higher price. Ground that has been fought over, as the generals learned in World War I, is more difficult to move across. And both sides have used the winter months to prepare their defenses. Although such figures must be treated with caution, Western intelligence agencies have estimated that during some of the worst fighting, Russia has suffered an average of more than 800 killed and wounded per day, and Ukrainian officials have acknowledged peaks of between 200 and 500 Ukrainian casualties per day. Russia has already lost more soldiers in this war than in its ten years of fighting in Afghanistan.

> Weapons that were unthinkable at the start of a war become acceptable.

The right kind of military preparations can matter more than overall firepower. In the early twentieth century, the British and German navies devoted enormous resources to building fleets of Dreadnought battleships, just as their counterparts today have sought aircraft carriers. But new and sometimes cheap technologies, such as mines a century ago and drones today, can render these huge war machines obsolete. In World War I, British and German battleships often remained in port because mines and submarines posed too great a hazard. In the current war, Ukraine has sunk the heavily armed flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet with two relatively low-tech antiship missiles, blown apart hundreds of Russian tanks by drones and artillery shells, and hamstrung Russia's supposedly superior air force with its air defenses.

The war in Ukraine has also resurfaced the age-old problem of insufficient or misdirected defense spending. Before 1914, the British kept their army small and underfunded and were slow to introduce new technologies such as the machine gun. In the run-up to World

War II, the United Kingdom and France were late to rearm, creating a disadvantage that helped convince their leaders to try to appease Hitler. Thus, the two countries did little to resist Germany's takeover of Austria and Czechoslovakia, giving the Nazis an even stronger position in the heart of Europe. Similarly unprepared, European leaders did little to respond to Putin's annexation of Crimea and his undeclared war in eastern Ukraine in 2014. That and the fact that the Ukrainian armed forces, then still modeled on the old hierarchical Soviet model and underequipped and poorly trained, had performed badly in 2014, were key parts of the context in which Russia decided to invade in 2022.

No less than in the past, the ability to keep society functioning and the war machine going can make the difference between victory and defeat. At the outbreak of World War I, armies on both sides found that in a matter of weeks, they were exhausting stocks of ammunition meant to last for months or more. The belligerents had to mobilize their societies to an extraordinary degree to ensure that they could keep fighting. So great was the strain on Russia that it brought about the collapse of the old regime in 1917, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, and a brutal and destructive civil war. In today's war, Ukrainian society has met the extraordinary challenges and hardships imposed on it and, by many indications, is more united than ever. But it is unclear how long the country can hold together as its infrastructure is steadily destroyed and more of its people flee abroad. More immediately, Ukraine may struggle to secure enough ammunition and other equipment, such as armored vehicles, to carry on, especially as both sides step up their fighting during the warmer months.

By the spring of 2023, Russia had already upped its defense production and was obtaining weapons from a number of other countries, including Iran and North Korea. Yet according to multiple reports and leaked intelligence documents, the Western powers—led by the United States, on which Ukraine depends—have been painfully slow to ramp up their delivery of weapons and materiel, leaving Kyiv with critical shortages. Much will depend on whether the West will continue to increase its support. Putin's Russia faces severe strains of its own, with cracks beginning to appear among the Russian elite and as hundreds of thousands of ordinary Russians, especially men of military age, leave the country. Will Russia hang together as the Soviet Union did in World War II? Or will the years to come produce a repeat of 1917?

PUTIN'S VERDUN

The longer a conflict lasts, the more important allies and resources become. In both world wars, Germany and its allies had some early successes, yet as the fight wore on, the opposing coalition won the economic war as well as the one on the battlefield. In each case, the United Kingdom could rely on its overseas empire for wealth and raw materials, and later on, the United States became, as President Franklin Roosevelt put it in World War II, the "arsenal of democracy" and ultimately a full military partner. That preponderance of resources and manpower was critical in bringing about Allied victories.

At the time of Putin's 2022 invasion, Russia appeared to have a significant advantage over Ukraine, including a far more powerful military and more of everything that could be counted, from tanks to troops. But as the war has continued, Ukraine's allies have proved more important than Russia's might. Indeed, for all the bravery and skill of Ukraine's armed forces, Kyiv could not have endured as long as it has without the extraordinary flow of arms and money from NATO countries. Wars are won or lost as much by access to resources or by attrition of the enemy's resources as by the skill of each side's commanders and the bravery of their combatants. And the publics of each belligerent nation must be sustained in their hopes of winning, and such persuasion can come at great cost.

One of the hallmarks of the two world wars was the enormous symbolic importance given to particular towns or regions—even if the costs of defending or capturing them seem to defy reason. Hitler wasted some of his best forces and equipment at Stalingrad because he refused to retreat. Not all the Pacific islands that American forces struggled to capture from Japan had great strategic significance. Consider Iwo Jima, in which the United States suffered more than 26,000 casualties in just 36 days, incurring some of the highest single-battle losses in Marine Corps history: the victory gave the Americans little more than a landing strip of debatable strategic value. And then there was Verdun in World War I. That fortress near France's border with Germany had some strategic significance, but its historical symbolism is what made it important to Erich von Falkenhayn, the chief of the German general staff. If the French could be defeated at a place so intertwined with French history, he felt, it would weaken their will to keep fighting. And even if they chose to defend it, they would take such losses that, as Falkenhayn put it, he would "bleed France white." It was a challenge the French understood and accepted.

The offensive started with a massive German attack in February 1916. When Falkenhayn's initial plan to seize all the hills around Verdun failed, however, the Germans found themselves committed to a devastating battle they were unable to win. At the same time, they could not withdraw from locations they had already taken, including the outlying French fortress of Douaumont: the gains had cost too many German lives, and German leaders had told the public that Douaumont was the key to the larger campaign. The battle of Verdun came to a close ten months later with around 143,000 German and 162,000 French dead and some 750,000 total casualties. In the end, the French had recaptured a large part of the territory the Germans had managed to seize, though the war itself would continue for nearly two more years.

Losers do not easily accept defeat.

The war in Ukraine has produced its own senseless battles of this kind. Consider the Russian siege of Bakhmut, a largely ruined town in the east with little apparent strategic significance. After more than eight months of fighting, both sides had expended more human and military resources than in any other battle of the war. According to U.S. intelligence estimates, between December and the beginning of May alone, Russia suffered 100,000 casualties at Bakhmut, including more than 20,000 killed. Yet for Moscow, the battle for Bakhmut was a chance for a much-needed victory. For Kyiv, the town's defense had become a symbol of Ukrainians' determination to defend their land at any cost. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, has himself made the comparison to Verdun.

But the prospect of more Verduns is not the only threat posed by a prolonged war in Ukraine. Of even greater concern is the possibility that it could draw in other powers and become ever more widespread and destructive. It is worth recalling that World War I started as a local confrontation in the Balkans between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Within five weeks, it had become a general European war because the other great powers chose to intervene, acting, so they believed, in their own interests. Then, at each successive stage, other powers steadily followed: Japan in the late summer of 1914, Bulgaria and Italy in 1915, Romania in 1916, and China, Greece, and the United States in 1917. Although Ukraine's many friends have not yet crossed the line of becoming actual combatants, they are more and more

closely involved, supplying, for example, intelligence and logistical support, in addition to more and more potent and sophisticated weapons. And as they increase the quality and quantity of their support, that in turn increases the risk that Russia will choose to escalate, possibly attacking neighboring countries such as Poland or the Baltic states. A further risk is that China could begin backing Russia more actively, sending lethal assistance and thereby raising the chances of a confrontation between Beijing and Washington.

As wars continue, ways of fighting and types of weapons that had been unthinkable at the start often become acceptable. Poison gas was outlawed in the 1899 Hague Convention, but that did not stop Germany from using it starting in 1915, with the Allies following suit by the final year of the war. In 1939, the United Kingdom held back from bombing German military targets, partly from fear of retaliation but also for ethical and legal considerations. A year later, it adopted a policy on unrestricted air war, even if that meant civilian casualties. And finally, with the Royal Air Force raids over German cities in the later stages of the war, civilians themselves became primary targets in what had become an effort to break enemy morale.

Russia has already violated international laws and norms on numerous occasions in Ukraine, and the small town of Bucha on the outskirts of Kyiv has become synonymous with war crimes. Worryingly, Russia has also threatened to break the taboo on the first use of nuclear weapons and has the capability to carry out chemical and biological warfare. It is difficult to speculate how Ukraine or its friends might react if Russia uses these weapons. But if Putin does use them and gets away with it, other countries ruled by authoritarian leaders would be tempted to follow his example.

THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

Even prolonged wars eventually end, sometimes when one belligerent can no longer fight, and sometimes through negotiation. The latter outcome, however, is only possible when both sides are prepared to talk and compromise. Some historians of World War II have argued that the Allies, with their insistence on an unconditional German surrender, gave Nazi Germany no choice but to fight to the bitter end. Yet there is no evidence that Hitler was ever prepared to negotiate seriously. In 1945, he killed himself rather than admit defeat, even though his cities lay in ruins, his armed forces were finished,

and the Allied armies were rapidly advancing on Berlin. Preparing the Japanese public to fight to the death in the event of an American invasion, the militarists controlling Japan were so short of weapons that they began issuing sharpened bamboo sticks. It was only after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that Japan offered an unconditional surrender.

It is possible that Ukraine and Russia, perhaps under pressure from China and the United States, might one day agree to talk about ending the war. Timing can be critical. In World War I, although various peace initiatives were floated—for example, by the pope and by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson—both sides continued to cling to the hope of military victory. Only in the summer of 1918, when the German high command recognized it was losing, did Germany ask for an armistice. But it is hard to imagine what such a settlement in Ukraine would look like, and as the fighting and losses on both sides mount and more reports of Russia's atrocities come to light, the accumulated hatred and bitterness will pose enormous obstacles to any concessions from either side.

Inevitably, in a long war, the objectives of both sides evolve. In World War I, Germany's war aims expanded to include a compliant—and perhaps annexed—Belgium in the West and an empire, economic or more formal, that would include the Baltic states and Ukraine. France, which had started the war wanting to reclaim its lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, by 1918 was contemplating annexing all German territory west of the Rhine River. And France and the United Kingdom quarreled over who would scoop up the largest parts of the defeated Ottoman Empire.

In the current struggle, Russia seems to have given up on taking Kyiv for now but appears set on absorbing as much of Ukraine as it can and reducing what is left to an impoverished, landlocked state. Ironically, Russia, which began the war proclaiming that its goal was the liberation of the innocent Ukrainians from the allegedly drug-addled, fascist government of Zelensky, now talks about ordinary Ukrainians as traitors. In turn, the Ukrainian government, which at first aimed simply to withstand the Russian assault and defend its land, has declared its intent to push Russia out of all of Ukraine, including Crimea, as well as the parts of Donetsk and Luhansk occupied by Russia since 2014. As long as both sides continue to hope for something they can call victory, getting them to the negotiating

table will be difficult, and the growing gap between their war aims will make reaching a settlement even harder.

In 1914, few expected the stalemate, the scale of the destruction, the spread of the fighting from Europe to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, or the damage to Europe's societies. When the guns finally fell silent, they did so in a very different Europe. Three empires—Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia—were in chaos, and the Ottoman Empire was about to break apart. The balance of power had shifted with a weakened British Empire and a rising United States and Japan. Will the war in Ukraine bring similarly large shifts, with a damaged Russia and an increasingly powerful and assertive China?

Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister in 1919, once said that making peace is harder than waging war. We may well be about to rediscover the truth of his words. Even if the war in Ukraine can reach something like an ending, building peace in its wake will be a formidable challenge. Losers do not easily accept defeat, and victors find it hard to be magnanimous. The Treaty of Versailles was never as punitive as Germany claimed, and many of the treaty's clauses were never enforced. But the Europe of the 1920s would have been a happier place if the Allies had not tried to extract high reparations from Germany and had welcomed it back into the community of nations sooner.

History can offer more encouraging examples. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. Marshall Plan helped rebuild the countries of western Europe into flourishing economies and, equally important, stable democracies. In what would have seemed extraordinary in 1945, West Germany and Italy, admittedly under the threat of the Cold War, were allowed to join NATO and became core members of the transatlantic alliance. Even former enemies can be transformed into close partners.

The fate of the Axis powers after World War II offers at least hope that the Russia of today may one day be as distant a memory as is the Germany of 1945. For Ukraine, there is the promise of better days if the war can be wound down favorably for it, with the country recovering much of its lost eastern territories and its Black Sea coast, as well as being admitted to the EU. But if that does not happen and the West does not make a sustained effort to help Ukraine rebuild—and if Western leaders are determined to treat Russia as a permanent pariah—then the future for both countries will be one of misery, political instability, and revanchism.

Europe's Real Test Is Yet to Come

Will the Continent Ever Get Serious About Its Own Security?

RADEK SIKORSKI

It is not yet clear if Ukraine will win the war, but Russia is definitely losing. On every metric of national power, Moscow's position has worsened since the invasion began, and that change has already shifted the position of other global powers. The United States and NATO have grown more credible. China has gained a Russian vassal and is now the clear leader of the autocratic world. The European Union has done much better than many anticipated, but it may yet be the biggest loser, thanks less to an overaggressive Russia than to an overconfident China. The EU can likely weather the fallout from this war, but it could be critically challenged in the next one.

Most Americans think of the EU as a free trade area with frills. Nothing could be further from the truth. Forged in the aftermath of World War II, the institutions that would become the EU were designed to bind the continent together so tightly that another war among

RADEK SIKORSKI is a Polish Member of the European Parliament and has served as Poland's Defense Minister, Foreign Minister, and Speaker of Parliament.

Illustration by Harry Haysom

Europeans would become unthinkable. In this, the bloc has succeeded brilliantly, helping deliver Europe's longest period of peace in centuries.

But Europeans made a mistake in assuming that others shared their worldview. Neither Russia, nor Middle Eastern powers, nor China ever believed that war was impossible, a position that most European leaders found hard to accept. Eastern Europeans who warned their friends in western Europe about Russian President Vladimir Putin were haughtily dismissed. Since February 2022, the reality of the Russian threat has become clear, as has the weakness of the European defense. Although Europe has made significant military and humanitarian contributions to Ukraine, from German tanks to Polish and Slovak fighter jets, the United States has been the main organizer and coordinator of the response to Russia's invasion, providing intelligence and managing the operation in support of Kyiv.

> In the next war, Europe might be on its own.

That Washington has mounted such a spirited defense of Ukraine is partly a matter of luck: if Donald Trump had been in office when Putin invaded, the U.S. president might have made a triumphant trip to Moscow instead of Kyiv. But even with Joe Biden in the White House, the United States might not have reacted so forcefully if its withdrawal from Afghanistan had been less humiliating. Ukraine was not, after all, a formal ally. The United States could easily have dismissed the war as Europe's problem—and in the future, it still could. Trump might well be the next U.S. president. But even if he is not, the isolationism he has encouraged among American voters will influence U.S. policy regardless of who wins in 2024. There is no guarantee of future U.S. support for Ukraine. And even if there were, China might one day carry out its official policy and attempt to reintegrate Taiwan by force, leaving the United States without the political bandwidth or the resources to come to Europe's assistance in a crisis. The Pentagon has formally abandoned the goal of being able to fight two major wars at once. Next time, Europe might be on its own.

For that reason, the EU must get serious about defense. As a confederation of sovereign states that have often pursued their own defense and foreign policies at the expense of the union's—and have very different perceptions of the threat posed by Moscow—the EU still lacks a strong defense capability and a common approach to security. As long as that is the case, the bloc will remain a hybrid

power: an equal to the United States and China in regulating trade, standards, and investments but a bit player when it comes to defense and security. It will remain a toothless superpower—which is to say, not a superpower at all.

ALL BARK AND NO BITE

Europe has been here before. At the start of the wars of Yugoslav succession in 1991, Luxembourg's foreign minister, Jacques Poos, announced, "The hour of Europe has dawned." But it took more than 100,000 deaths (mostly of Bosnians) and a belated U.S. intervention for the slaughter to end in 1995. Four years later, EU members declared that by 2003 they would be able to deploy a force of up to 60,000 troops within 60 days and sustain it for at least a year. But nothing of the sort materialized. Although soldiers have served under the EU flag in dozens of countries, they have mostly conducted low-intensity operations that did not prepare them for anything more ambitious. Perhaps the EU's most successful operation was an aerial strike against Somali pirates in 2012, which deterred hijackers in the Horn of Africa for a while. For the most part, however, the up to 4,000 personnel serving in EU civilian and military missions help monitor borders, train military and police forces, and observe elections—mainly in Africa.

Europe's real punch was supposed to come from so-called battle groups: reinforced battalions of roughly 1,500 troops capable of being deployed to hot spots on short notice. The trouble was that EU member states had shrinking expeditionary capacity and more urgent commitments during NATO's long mission in Afghanistan. Moreover, the subunits of the battle groups had to come from and be paid for by EU member states, which led to shirking, particularly by smaller countries. And the battle groups ultimately remained under the political control of contributing member states rather than the EU itself, so it proved impossible to reach a unanimous decision to act, even in dire emergencies such as the 2011 crisis in Libya. The first battle group became active in 2007, but none have ever been deployed, and the concept seems to have gone into hibernation.

Another attempt to get serious about European security was the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) mechanism, EU-speak for a coalition of the willing. In 2009, Poland and France proposed creating a vanguard group of countries willing to act when the rest of the EU would not. The group would welcome only countries that

spent two percent of their GDP on defense, agreed to common rules of engagement, and deployed their soldiers under joint command. The history of the EU contains plenty of examples of pioneering groups of countries establishing areas of integration that others eventually joined: the common travel area known as Schengen, the EU prosecutor's office, and, indeed, the euro currency. This is arguably the main way the bloc evolves. But PESCO did not turn out to be a groundbreaking initiative. Thanks in part to pressure from Germany, the program that launched in 2017 included almost all member states. That meant the convoy would move at the pace of the slowest ship, or not at all, given that some EU member states consider themselves militarily neutral. PESCO has now shriveled into a joint spending program on military capabilities and technologies.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU adopted a Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, which aims to enhance military mobility within the EU, facilitate live exercises on land and at sea, and, above all, establish a so-called rapid deployment force of roughly 5,000 troops. The initiative promises a "quantum leap forward" in European security, building on the European Peace Facility, a defense fund worth a little more than $1 billion per year. Originally conceived as a mechanism for paying for the common costs of EU operations, mostly in Africa and the Balkans, it has evolved into the European equivalent of the U.S. Foreign Military Financing program, bankrolling the purchase and repair of weapons for Ukraine as well as military assistance for Nigeria, Jordan, and North Macedonia, among others.

By delivering such assistance, the EU crossed an important barrier. Two years ago, it would have been unthinkable for the bloc to buy lethal equipment and deliver it to nonmembers at war. Now that it has done so, the main limiting factor is money. Aid to Ukraine has eaten up most of the fund's annual allocations, necessitating tough decisions by the European Council. But even if the European Peace Facility is expanded and the rapid deployment force becomes operational, Europe will hardly be able to defend itself if the United States is otherwise engaged. The EU could perhaps secure a Libyan port if it fell to human smugglers. It could sort out a Balkan warlord or a small rogue state. It could probably even deter Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko from sending saboteurs, terrorists, and migrants across the EU's eastern border. But the bloc could not deter Putin.

That, of course, is NATO's job, and Biden's forceful reaction to Putin's aggression has restored the credibility of an alliance that French President Emmanuel Macron not long ago dismissed as brain dead. Washington's courageous use of intelligence to warn the Ukrainians of Russia's impending invasion has wiped away most of the stain of its misuse of faulty intelligence to make the case for the Iraq war. And Putin's criminal megalomania has reunited the West. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, U.S. contributions to Ukraine total more than $70 billion—roughly equivalent to overall EU contributions (those of EU institutions and member states added together). But it remains to be seen how long that unity will last and what will happen if Europe is less lucky next time around.

DIVIDED WE FALL

One would think that the sight of apartment blocks and power stations being hit by missiles would galvanize Europeans to demand more action, but it hasn't. Defense companies have had to wait for over a year just for contracts to replenish Europe's dangerously low ammunition stocks. They have not even begun to produce new weapons systems. And despite appeals by Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, to create a defense union worthy of its name, progress has been glacial. The reasons for this are not personal but historical, geographical, psychological, political, and, above all, constitutional.

Unlike the continental United States, which is pretty evenly secured from foreign threats, the European Union is much more vulnerable in some regions than in others. Residents of Narva, Estonia, for instance, live across a narrow river from the Russian town of Ivangorod, established by Ivan the Terrible. They know that Narva has changed hands a dozen times: Denmark, tsarist Russia, Sweden, Germany, and the Soviet Union have all ruled it at various points. They know that it looks the way it does—sprinkled with modern buildings that clearly replaced older ones destroyed by bombs—because of a vicious battle between occupying German forces and the Red Army. And they worry that Russia never fully acquiesced to "losing" Estonia in 1991 and that it might try to take it again, which is why Estonia supplies one of the biggest per capita contributions to Ukraine of all the NATO allies.

By contrast, residents of Lisbon, Rome, and Brussels have never seen a Russian soldier in their cities who wasn't invited—and neither have any of their ancestors. Soviet communism was an ideology

with global ambitions, but Russian nationalism is not a product that travels well. So most Portuguese, Italians, and Belgians support efforts to halt Putin's trampling of postwar taboos, but they hope the conflict between Russia and Ukraine can be resolved through compromise. They think Putin is a criminal, and they pity and admire the Ukrainians. But they are not willing to change their way of life on account of a distant threat.

In Germany, however, it is a different story altogether. The Russians came to Berlin as conquerors within living memory and even ruled a quarter of Germany by proxy until 1991. Yet the Germans mostly refused to recognize Russia as a threat until 2022, perhaps out of gratitude for peaceful unification, which they credited to the moderation of the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. Back in 2018, I had surreal conversations with German journalists, think-tank analysts, and politicians after Russia finished upgrading its nuclear forces in the Kaliningrad exclave, gaining for the first time the ability to strike Berlin. "Aren't you worried?" I asked. They weren't, because they had persuaded themselves that it wasn't NATO, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, the Polish Solidarity movement, or the pope that won the Cold War but their *Ostpolitik*, or opening and dialogue with the communist bloc. What worked with the much more powerful Soviet Union could work with Putin's Russia, they thought: strategic patience, persuasion, and trade—cars and turbines for oil and gas—would eventually convince Putin to mellow.

European politicians must have known that public attitudes toward Russia would shift when the first bombs fell on Kyiv, but they declined to adopt the clear language of power politics that Putin might have understood and respected. Even after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz made his historic speech spelling out the transformation of Germany's defense posture, it took many months for the German political establishment to accept that there was no going back to business as usual with Putin. Some Germans probably still hope there might be.

If it wasn't enough for Europe's largest country to be ambivalent about defense, the EU's structure and lack of a constitution also militate against collective security. This is something that Americans should grasp, since their own war of independence was fought under the Articles of Confederation, before the United States adopted its constitution. Without a central budget or an executive authority that could

force states to provide the necessary men and provisions, the war was sometimes shambolic; the colonists just barely won their independence.

The EU is a confederation, not a federation. Its members are bound together by treaties and joint decisions, but ultimate power lies with the member states. If a country does not fulfill its obligations to the bloc, it can be criticized, have its funds suspended, or even be taken to the European Court of Justice, but it cannot be compelled to do anything. This is especially true when it comes to intelligence, internal security, and defense.

In theory, the EU has a common foreign and security policy. Article 26 of the Treaty on European Union, signed in Lisbon in 2007, says, "The European Council shall identify the Union's strategic interests, determine the objectives of and define general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy, including for matters with defense implications." In addition, the article states, "The common foreign and security policy shall be put into effect by the High Representative and by the Member States, using national and Union resources."

Europe could become a cross between a theme park and a hospice.

The idea was that EU foreign ministers would coordinate their national interests at the monthly meeting of the bloc's Foreign Affairs Council, and the EU's highest officials would then implement their joint positions. Unfortunately, the reality has been that on issues that matter—Iran, China, Russia, Ukraine—groups of self-appointed countries make policy on their own and treat joint EU policy as an afterthought. The ill-fated Minsk process initiated after Russia's initial 2014 invasion of Ukraine is a prime example: Germany and France usurped the role of the EU and not only failed to resolve the crisis but also sowed mistrust across eastern Europe.

Ignoring the Treaty on European Union undercuts the effectiveness of EU foreign policy. When Macron and von der Leyen both visited China in April 2023, the French leader received a state banquet and military parade, whereas the European Commission president was given a lukewarm welcome. The EU has the legal and institutional basis for a common defense and security policy, but key member states cannot bring themselves to act in unison. Perhaps Washington would face a similar problem if Texas and California had been major powers for centuries before they joined the United States.

THE NIGHTMARE SCENARIO

Putin is unlikely to win militarily in Ukraine, and Western sanctions will probably prevent Russia from building a new army capable of threatening Europe for half a decade or so. But even that outcome would not protect Europe from its worst nightmare: a conflict between the United States and China that consumes Washington and leaves Europe to defend itself. The European People's Party's position paper on China, which I drafted, envisages a testy cohabitation between Europe and China: collaborate where possible, compete where needed, and confront where necessary. Such a policy could persist indefinitely for mutual benefit. It is also the U.S. policy, minus the bellicose rhetoric. But the EU cannot control its future relationship with China. European countries are status quo powers, whereas China is a revisionist one that will decide if, when, and how it will upend the existing order. Europe has no intention of taking any Chinese territory; it is China that is threatening to take what it does not control today.

Europe is aligned with the United States in recognizing the nature of the challenge posed by China, and the EU is already working with Washington to prevent Beijing from acquiring sensitive technologies, for instance through the EU-U.S. Trade and Technology Council. But for the EU to be able to defend itself and thereby free up most U.S. forces for a possible conflict in Asia, it will have to make the difficult decision to invest serious resources in defense—and soon. It takes about a decade for a new weapons system to progress from conception to contracting and production to use on the battlefield. If China is preparing to take Taiwan by force by the end of the decade, as some analysts claim, Europe is already way behind the curve.

The scenario that should keep Europeans awake at night is a Chinese assault on Taiwan that forces Europe to make a choice between its largest trading partner in goods and its most powerful ally. Macron was widely criticized in April 2023 for saying that Europe faced a "great risk" of getting "caught up in crises that are not ours, which prevents it from building its strategic autonomy." Yet he was only expressing out loud what many Europeans whisper. A war between the United States and China over Taiwan would be a disaster for Europe. According to Santander Bank, the cost of Putin's war to the EU's economy has been the equivalent of roughly $190 billion, or between 1.1 and 1.4 percent of the union's GDP in

2022. Russia was always a relatively small economy on which Europe depended mainly for a little more than a third of its oil and gas needs. But abruptly replacing those supplies has depressed growth, caused a spike in inflation, and delayed Europe's recovery from the pandemic. A sudden decoupling from China would be many times more expensive because Europe is much more dependent on China than it was on Russia before the war. Not only is China the EU's largest source of imported goods, but it is also a leading destination of European exports across the board. The combination of having to buy more expensive natural gas from Qatar and the United States and losing access to China's lucrative market for European cars, machinery, and luxury goods could cause Europe to deindustrialize. The continent could become a cross between a theme park and a hospice—not in a matter of generations, as demographers have long warned, but in a matter of years.

Macron correctly expressed Europe's anxiety, but he was wrong to think that Europe could remain on the sidelines of a hot U.S.-Chinese conflict. True, the EU has no legal obligation to back the United States in such a scenario; mutual NATO guarantees only apply to the North Atlantic area. But politics and economics would likely trump all. Regardless of who was president, the United States would do what it always does when faced with a monumental challenge. It would ask, Are you with us, or with our enemies? And when faced with such a choice, could Europe really remain on the sidelines for long? Would the majority of European states risk the loss of the U.S. alliance and the U.S. market? Would Europeans continue to trade with China as American soldiers were dying in defense of friendly democratic states in Asia? I doubt it. If nothing else, Europe would risk splitting along the east-west axis, as it did over the ill-conceived Iraq war. Europe cannot be united on the basis of anti-Americanism or even aloofness from the United States. Europe can become strategically relevant—and more integrated—only in alignment with the United States. France's vision of a more united Europe should be appreciated, but it needs to be cured of its Gaullist fantasies.

To prepare for the nightmare scenario, Europe must not only augment its defenses but also find closer sources of raw materials and reshore its industries and supply chains. Such "de-risking" will be incredibly difficult to enact. It will not be easy, for example, to

find new markets for half the luxury cars that Germany produces each year. Moreover, Europeans must ask themselves how they will be able to afford to ban new cars with combustion engines by 2035, as they have pledged to do, when China has gained the upper hand in making affordable electric vehicles. Only the rich can play the role of a global conscience on climate change. And Europe will need to meet these economic challenges while also managing its enlargement, porous external borders, and authoritarian-leaning member states.

Russia can choose to be an ally of the West or a vassal of China.

A conflict with China is not inevitable, and Europe should do its utmost to prevent it. The country has already peaked demographically and might finally have the debt crisis that analysts have predicted for years. It might also withdraw its support from Russia (or Russians might get rid of Putin and withdraw from the Ukrainian quagmire altogether). Judging by the paltry results of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow in March 2023, the alliance of autocracies is not as solid as previously thought.

China is happy to give Putin political and propaganda support while denying Moscow the military supplies it craves. It is a safe bet that Russian capabilities in East Asia, which were never sufficient to take on China, have deteriorated further. China, by contrast, is arming itself at a breakneck speed, including in the nuclear sphere, where Beijing must reach parity with Moscow and Washington to credibly deter the United States from defending Taiwan.

Military capabilities built for one scenario can usually be used in others. The Chinese government has kept quiet about it, but Radio France International reported in March 2023 that China's Ministry of Natural Resources had issued new guidelines for maps, requiring the addition of old Chinese names alongside Russian geographical names in eight places along the Russian-Chinese border, including Vladivostok, which should now be referred to as Haishenwai. As if bowing to Beijing, Moscow has said it will open the port of Vladivostok to Chinese transit trade for the first time in 163 years. Russia gained control of the bay on which it built that port and the rest of Outer Manchuria in 1860 during the Second Opium War while threatening to torch Beijing. Xi might well conclude that Chinese honor could more easily be restored—and his place

in history assured—by recovering a province lost to Russia than by risking a world war over Taiwan.

Great powers have made similar calculations in the past. In 1939, imperial Japan fought the Soviet Union in the battle of Khalkhin Gol at the confluence of Mongolia and Manchuria. Commanded by a then obscure general named Georgy Zhukov, Soviet forces roundly defeated the Japanese, finally agreeing to a cease-fire on September 15. Only then did the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin give the order to fulfill a pact with Nazi Germany and invade Poland. But the most significant consequence of the battle was that it convinced Japan that the Soviet Union was stronger than it seemed and that Japan had better try its luck to the east instead of to the north. The eventual result was the attack on Pearl Harbor.

This time, it could be Russian weakness, not strength, that is exposed. Putin's reckless decision to invade Ukraine has revealed Russia to be much weaker than many believed and accelerated the divergence between Moscow's and Beijing's trajectories as world powers. China is already taking Russia's discounted energy and raw materials. If Russia continues to decline at the present rate, Beijing may eventually buy Moscow's gold reserves and ultimately make claims on its land. Putin thought he would gain Kyiv but might instead lose Vladivostok. As the former U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski used to say, Russia can choose to be an ally of the West or a vassal of China. Putin chose not what was good for Russia but what was good for him and would most likely preserve his dictatorial power. Many patriotic Russians, and not just those in exile, already anticipate disaster at the hands of China. A post-Putin Russia might reverse his disastrous course. But as long as he remains at the helm, Russia will remain a problem instead of part of the solution.

Europe's post–Cold War illusion of having reached the plateau of eternal peace has sadly been shattered. The continent's strategic outlook, both in its near abroad and globally, has darkened. Its future security, power, and prosperity now depend on whether, and how quickly, it acts to address its vulnerabilities. The scale of the challenge is certainly beyond the capability of any European country acting alone. It can only be met by acting together and finally getting serious about defense. To survive and prosper in a world of battling giants, Europe must transform itself from a militarily weak confederation into a genuine superpower.

The Great Convergence

Global Equality and Its Discontents

BRANKO MILANOVIC

We live in an age of inequality—or so we're frequently told. Across the globe, but especially in the wealthy economies of the West, the gap between the rich and the rest has widened year after year and become a chasm, spreading anxiety, stoking resentment, and roiling politics. It is to blame for everything from the rise of former U.S. President Donald Trump and for the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom to the "yellow vest" movement in France and the recent protests of retirees in China, which has one of the world's highest rates of income inequality. Globalization, the argument goes, may have enriched certain elites, but it hurt many other people, ravaging one-time industrial heartlands and making people susceptible to populist politics.

There is much that is true about such narratives—if you look only at each country on its own. Zoom out beyond the level of the nation-state

BRANKO MILANOVIC is a Senior Scholar at the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality at the CUNY Graduate Center and the author of the forthcoming *Visions of Inequality: From the French Revolution to the End of the Cold War*.

to the entire globe, and the picture looks different. At that scale, the story of inequality in the twenty-first century is the reverse: the world is growing more equal than it has been for over 100 years.

The term "global inequality" refers to the income disparity between all citizens of the world at a given time, adjusted for the differences in prices between countries. It is commonly measured by the Gini coefficient, which runs from zero, a hypothetical case of full equality in which every person earned the same amount, to 100, another hypothetical case in which a single individual made all the income. Thanks to the empirical work of many researchers, economists can draw the overall contours of the change in estimated global inequality over the past two centuries.

> The world is the most equal it has been in over a century.

From the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century to about the middle of the twentieth century, global inequality rose as wealth became concentrated in Western industrialized countries. It peaked during the Cold War, when the globe was commonly divided into the "First World," the "Second World," and the "Third World," denoting three levels of economic development. But then, around 20 years ago, global inequality began to fall, largely thanks to the economic rise of China, which until recently was the world's most populous country. Global inequality reached its height on the Gini index of 69.4 in 1988. It dropped to 60.1 in 2018, a level not seen since the end of the nineteenth century.

Progress toward greater global equality is not inevitable. China has now grown too wealthy to help meaningfully reduce global inequality, and big countries such as India may not grow to the extent necessary to have the kind of effect China did. Much will depend on how countries in Africa fare; the continent could power the next great reduction in global poverty and inequality. But even if global inequality falls, that does not mean that the social and political turmoil in individual countries will diminish—if anything, the opposite is true. Because of vast differences in global wages, poor Westerners for decades have ranked among the highest-earning people in the world. That will no longer be the case as non-Westerners with rising incomes will displace poor and middle-class Westerners from their lofty perches. Such a shift will underscore the polarization in rich countries, between those who are wealthy by global standards and those who are not.

THE THREE AGES OF INEQUALITY

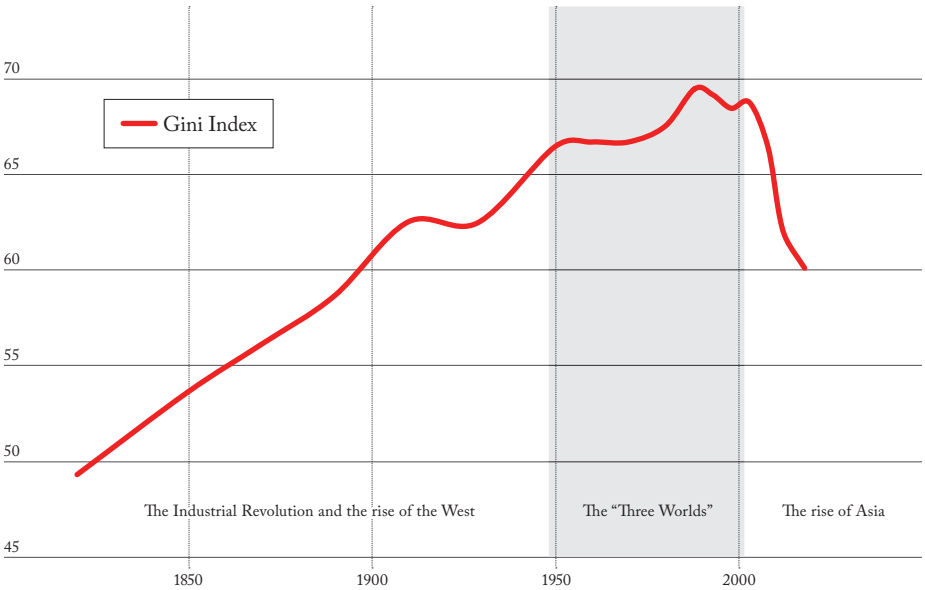
The first era of global inequality stretches from roughly 1820 to 1950, a period characterized by the steady rise of inequality. Around the time of the Industrial Revolution (approximately 1820), global inequality was rather modest. The GDP of the richest country (the United Kingdom) was five times greater than that of the poorest country (Nepal) in 1820. (The equivalent ratio between the GDPs of the richest and poorest countries today is more than 100 to 1.) An overall Gini score of 50 in 1820 is typical of very unequal countries today, such as Brazil and Colombia, but when considering the world writ large, such a level of inequality is actually rather low. (For perspective, the United States currently has a Gini score of 41 while Denmark, a social democracy that prides itself on its egalitarianism, has a score of 27.)

The growth of global inequality during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was driven both by widening gaps between various countries (measured by the differences in their per capita GDPs) and by greater inequalities within countries (measured by the differences in citizens' incomes in a given country). The country-to-country differences reflected what economic historians call the Great Divergence, the growing disparity between, on the one hand, the industrializing countries of western Europe, North America, and, later, Japan, and, on the other hand, China, India, the African subcontinent, the Middle East, and Latin America, where per capita incomes stagnated or even declined. This economic divergence had a political and military corollary, with rising imperial states leaving moribund or conquered ones in the dust. This period coincided with the European conquest of most of Africa, the colonization of India and Southeast Asia, and the partial colonization of China.

The second era extends over the latter half of the twentieth century. It featured very high global inequality, fluctuating between 67 and 70 Gini points. Inequality among countries was extremely high: in 1952, for instance, the United States boasted a per capita GDP 15 times that of China; with six percent of the world's population, the United States produced 40 percent of global output. Inequality within countries, however, was falling nearly everywhere. It fell in the United States as higher education became more broad based and affordable for the middle classes and the rudiments of a welfare state

THE AGES OF GLOBAL INEQUALITY

Estimated global income inequality, 1820–2018



Sources: "Inequality Among World Citizens: 1890-1922," American Economic Review, *François Bourguignon and Christian Morrisson, 2002; "Global Income Distribution: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to the Great Recession,"* The World Bank Economic Review, *Christoph Lakner and Branko Milanovic, 2016; "After the Financial Crisis: The Evolution of the Global Income Distribution Between 2008 and 2013,"* The Review of Income and Wealth, *Milanovic, 2021; unpublished data, Milanovic, 2022.*

emerged; it fell in communist China with the nationalization of large private assets in the 1950s and then the compulsive egalitarianism of the Cultural Revolution; and it fell in the Soviet Union as the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's reforms cut the excessively high wages and perks of the Stalinist nomenklatura.

The second half of the twentieth century—the time of highest global inequality—was also the time of the "Three Worlds": the First World of rich capitalist countries, mostly in western Europe and North America; the Second World of the somewhat poorer socialist countries, including the Soviet Union and eastern Europe; and the Third World of poor countries, most in Africa and Asia and many just emerging from colonization. Latin American countries are often added to this last group, even though they were, on average, richer than other Third World countries and had enjoyed independence since the early nineteenth century.

That era continued in the decade following the end of the Cold War but gave way to a new phase at the turn of the twenty-first century. Global inequality began to dip about two decades ago and continues to do so today. It has dropped from 70 Gini points around the year 2000 to 60 Gini points two decades later. This decrease in global inequality, having occurred over the short span of 20 years, is more precipitous than was the increase in global inequality during the nineteenth century. The decrease is driven by the rise of Asia, particularly China. The country made a massive contribution to the reduction in global inequality for a number of reasons: its economy started from a low base and could thus grow at a spectacular rate for two generations, and by virtue of the country's population, the growth touched between one-fourth and one-fifth of all people on earth.

Both by dint of its large population and its relative poverty, India, the world's most populous country, could play a role similar to the one China has played over the last 20 years. If more Indians become wealthier in the coming decades, they will help drive down overall global inequality. Many uncertainties cloud the future of the Indian economy, but its gains in recent decades are indisputable. In the 1970s, India's share of global GDP was less than three percent, whereas that of Germany, a major industrial power, was seven percent. By 2021, those proportions had been swapped.

But even as overall global inequality has dropped since the turn of the century, inequality has risen in many big countries, including China, India, Russia, the United States, and even the welfare states of continental Europe. Only Latin America has bucked the trend by reducing its high inequality through broad redistributive programs in Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere. The third era mirrors the first: it has seen the rise of incomes in one part of the world and their relative decline in another. In the first era, it was the industrialization of the West and the concurrent deindustrialization of India (then under the thumb of the British, who suppressed local industries); in the third, it was the industrialization of China and, to some extent, the deindustrialization of the West. But the current era has seen the opposite effect on global inequality. In the nineteenth century, the rise of the West led to growing inequalities between countries. In the more recent period, the rise of Asia has led to a decline in global inequality. The first period was one of divergence; the current period is one of convergence.

NOT SO LONELY AT THE TOP

Drill down to the level of a single person, and what becomes apparent is probably the greatest reshuffling of individual positions on the global income ladder since the Industrial Revolution. Of course, people tend to care about their status in relation to those around them, not necessarily with respect to others far away, whom they will rarely meet. But slipping in the global income rankings does have real costs. Many globally priced goods and experiences may become increasingly unavailable to middle-class people in the West: for example, the ability to attend international sporting or art events, vacation in exotic locations, buy the newest smartphone, or watch a new TV series may all become financially out of reach. A German worker may have to substitute a four-week vacation in Thailand with a shorter one in another, perhaps less attractive location. A hard-pressed Italian owner of an apartment in Venice may not be able to enjoy it because he needs to rent it out year-round to supplement his income.

> Western societies will soon be as polarized as those in Latin America.

People in the lower-income groups of rich countries have historically ranked high in the global income distribution. But they are now being overtaken, in terms of their incomes, by people in Asia. China's rapid growth has reshaped all aspects of the global income distribution, but the change is most pronounced around the middle and upper-middle of the global rankings, the part typically full of working-class people in Western countries. Higher up, in the top five percent of income earners in the world, Chinese growth has made less of an impact because not enough Chinese have become so rich as to displace the richest Westerners, in particular Americans, who have historically dominated the very top of the global income pyramid in the past 150 to 200 years.

The graph below, which demonstrates how global income rankings have changed for people in different countries, shows the positions of Chinese urban deciles (each decile is composed of ten percent of that country's population, ranked from the poorest to the richest) compared with Italian deciles in 1988 and 2018. I use data for Chinese city dwellers because China conducts separate household surveys for urban and rural areas and because China's urban population (now over 900 million people) is much more strongly integrated with the rest of the world than its rural population. Urban Chinese moved up between

24 and 29 global percentiles, meaning that people in a given Chinese urban decile leapfrogged over one-fourth or more of the world's population in just 30 years. For example, in 1988, a person with the median urban Chinese income would have ranked around the 45th income percentile globally. By 2018, such a person would have advanced to the 70th percentile. This is no surprise in light of the extraordinarily high per capita GDP growth rate in China over that period—an average of around eight percent per year. But the growing standing of Chinese earners has resulted in the relative decline of those in other countries.

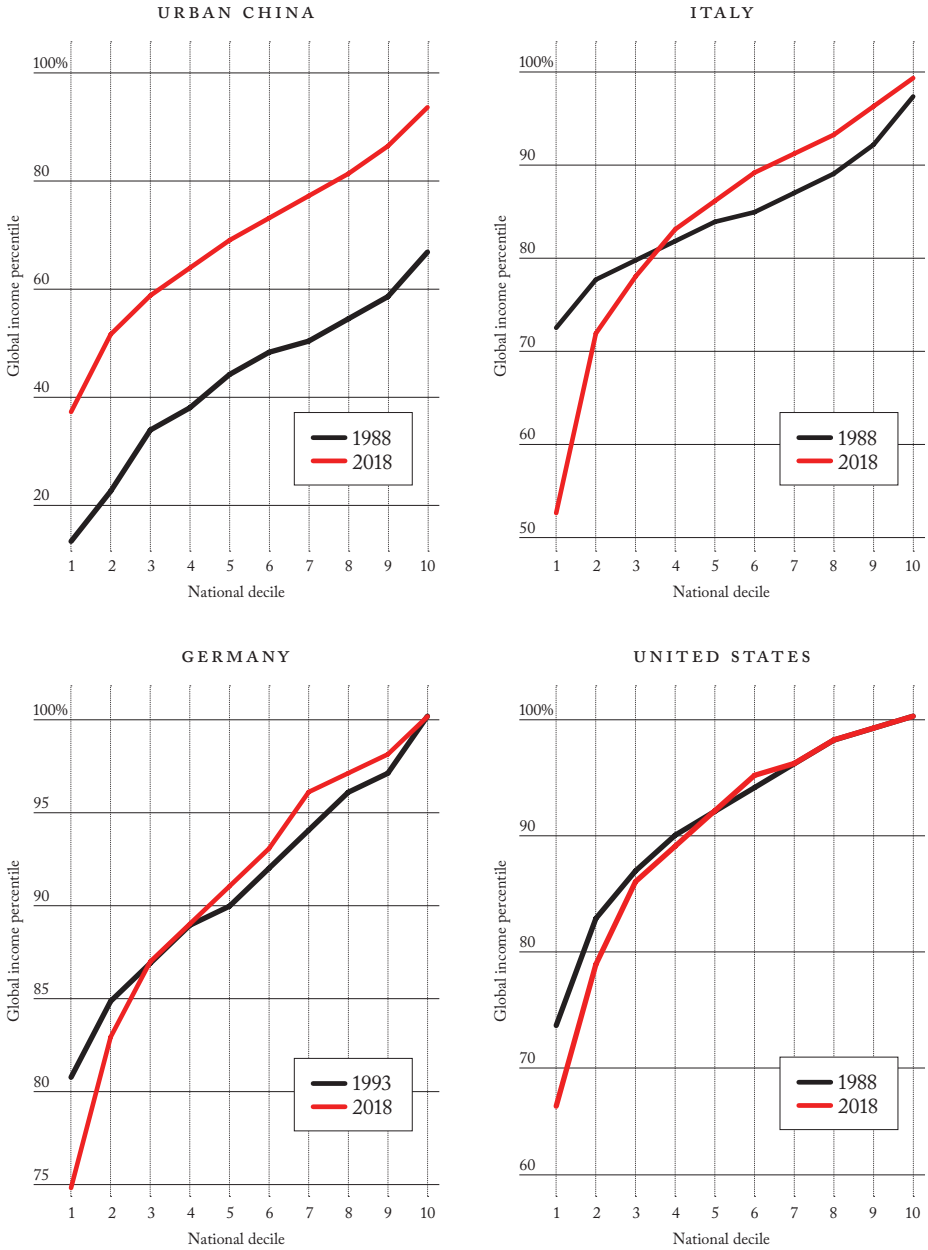
Italy provides the clearest example of this effect. Between 1988 and 2018, average Italians in the country's bottom decile have seen their global ranking slide by 20 percentiles. The second and the third lowest Italian deciles have fallen globally by six and two percentiles, respectively. The global position of wealthy Italians, meanwhile, has barely been affected by the rise of China: wealthier Italians, it turns out, tend to sit above the part of the global distribution where Chinese growth has wrought tremendous change. The changes observed in Italy are not unique to that country. The average German in his country's poorest income decile has slipped from the 81st percentile globally in 1993 to the 75th percentile in 2018. In the United States, the average person in the poorest decile has moved down between 1988 and 2018 from the 74th to the 67th global percentile. But rich Germans and Americans have remained where they were before: at the top.

The data reveal a striking story, one that is hard to detect when looking only at national studies of inequality: Western countries are increasingly composed of people who belong to very different parts of the global income distribution. Different global income positions correspond to different consumption patterns, and these patterns are influenced by global fashions. As a result, the sense of widening inequality in Western countries may become acute as their populations increasingly belong, measured by income levels, to very different parts of a global income hierarchy. The social polarization that would ensue would make Western societies resemble those of many Latin American countries, where gulfs in wealth and lifestyle are incredibly pronounced.

Unlike the middle of the global income distribution, the composition of the top has remained much the same over the previous three decades: dominated by Westerners. In 1988, 207 million people made up the top five percent of earners in the world; in 2018, that number was 330 million, reflecting both the increase in the world population

CHANGING FORTUNES

How segments of various populations shifted positions on the global income distribution between 1988 and 2018



Sources: "Global Income Distribution," Lakner and Milanovic, 2016; "After the Financial Crisis," Milanovic, 2021; unpublished data, Milanovic 2022.

and the broadening of available data. They represent a group of people that can be called the "globally affluent," sitting a rung beneath the more rarefied global top one percent.

Americans make up the plurality of this group. In both 1988 and 2018, over 40 percent of the globally affluent were U.S. citizens. British, Japanese, and German citizens come next. Overall, Westerners (including Japan) account for almost 80 percent of the group. Urban Chinese broke into the globally affluent only more recently. Their share has gone up from 1.6 percent in 2008 to 5.0 percent in 2018.

From Asian countries (excluding Japan), only urban Chinese really register among that group. The shares of urban Indians and Indonesians in the global top five percent were insignificant in 1988. These numbers rose only a little between 2008 and 2018: in the case of India, from 1.3 to 1.5 percent; Indonesia, from 0.3 to 0.5 percent. These proportions remain small. The same is true of people in other parts of the world, including Africa, Latin America, and eastern Europe, that, with the exception of people from Brazil and Russia, never had a significant participation among the globally affluent. The top of the global income distribution thus remains dominated by Westerners, especially by Americans. But if the gap in growth rates between East Asia, especially China, and the West persists, the national composition of the globally affluent will change, too. That change is indicative of the evolving balance of economic and political power in the world. What these individual-level data show is, as in the past, the rise of some powers and the relative decline of others.

CATCHING UP

The future direction of global inequality is hard to predict. Three external shocks make the current period unlike any that preceded it: the COVID-19 pandemic, which slashed countries' growth rates (India's, for instance, was negative eight percent in 2020); the deterioration of U.S.-Chinese relations, which, given that the United States and China account for over a third of global GDP, will invariably affect global inequality; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has raised food and energy prices around the world and shaken the global economy.

These shocks and their uncertain legacies make forecasting the future of global inequality an unenviable task for economists. Yet certain developments seem likely. For one, China's increased wealth will limit its ability to lower global inequality, and its upper-middle and

upper classes will start entering in great numbers the top of the global income distribution. The increased incomes of other Asians, from countries such as India and Indonesia, will have a similar effect.

At some point in the coming decades, the shares of Chinese and American populations among the globally affluent might become approximately the same—that is, there may be as many wealthy people in China by global standards as there are in the United States. Such a development is important because it would reflect a wider shift of economic, technological, and even cultural power in the world.

> The prospect of a meaningful African growth surge in the coming years is slim.

To determine exactly when this could happen requires a fairly complicated calculation based on many assumptions, including about the future growth rates of the two economies, changes in internal income distributions, demographic trends, and the ongoing urbanization of China. But the most important factor in determining when the number of globally affluent Chinese people will equal the number of globally affluent Americans is the difference in GDP per capita growth rates between a more rapidly expanding China and the United States. That difference (known as "the growth gap") was six percentage points in the 1980s and seven percentage points in the 1990s but rose to nine percentage points in the period between China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 and the global financial crisis in 2008. The difference has since decreased to about four and a half percentage points. That gap might shrink further to between two and four percentage points, as Chinese growth will likely decelerate in the coming years. Likewise, the population growth rates of the two countries may not differ much even if the United States currently boasts a slightly higher rate than China's.

With all that in mind, it is possible to estimate when the absolute number of Chinese people who earn incomes equal to or higher than the U.S. median income will match the absolute number of such Americans. (The latter are, by definition, one-half of the U.S. population.) At present, just under 40 million Chinese people fulfill that condition (as opposed to about 165 million Americans). But with a growth gap of around three percent per year, in 20 years the two groups would be of equal size; if the growth gap is smaller (say, only two percent per year), parity would be achieved a decade later.

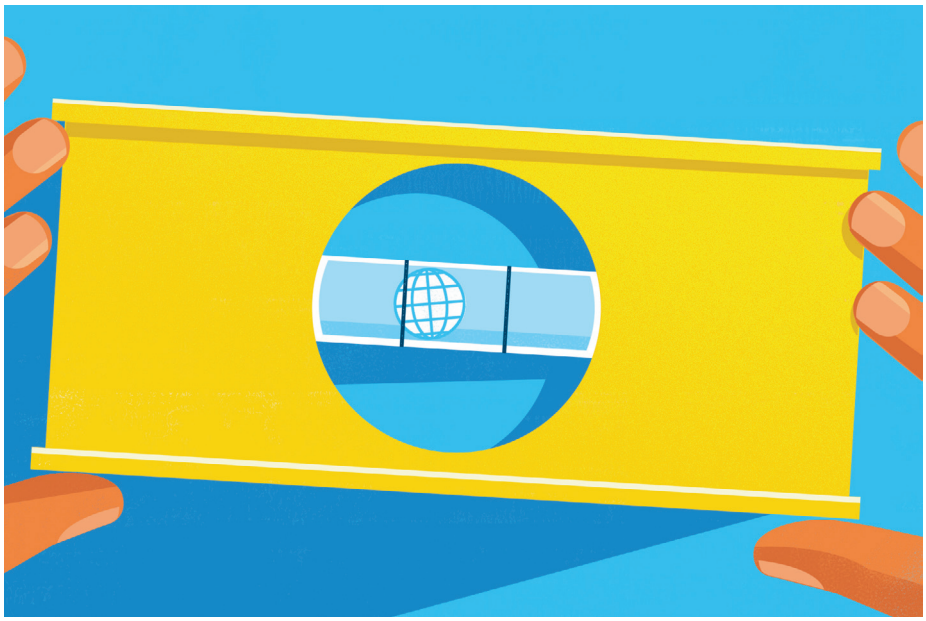
A generation or a generation and a half from now is less than the time that has elapsed from the opening of China in the 1980s to the present. China is tantalizingly close to something that no one would have predicted when Mao died in 1976: that in 70 years, the then impoverished country would have as many rich citizens as does the United States.

THE AFRICAN ENGINE

As a result of this dramatic transformation, China will no longer contribute to the decline in global inequality. African countries, however, may drive its future reduction. African countries need to grow faster than the rest of the world, especially faster than the rich countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and China, to achieve that goal. They play a crucial role here not only because they are mostly poor but also because as birthrates are dropping below replacement levels around the world, Africa's population is expected to grow in this century and perhaps even into the next.

It seems unlikely, however, that Africa can replicate the recent economic success of Asia. Africa's post-1950 record provides few grounds for optimism. Take as a hypothetical objective the rate of growth of five percent per capita maintained over at least five years, which is ambitious but not unattainable: only six African countries have succeeded in achieving it in the past 70 years. These exceptional episodes of growth involved in all but one case very small countries (in terms of population) and those whose growth depended on an export commodity (oil in the case of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, and cocoa in the case of Côte d'Ivoire). Botswana and Cape Verde managed it, too, but they are very small countries. Ethiopia was the only populous country (with more than 100 million people) that sustained a high rate of growth, which it did for 13 consecutive years, from 2005 to 2017. This trend has since ended, owing to the outbreak of a new civil war in 2020 and renewed conflict with Eritrea.

This simple exercise suggests that the most populous African countries—Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and South Africa—will have to buck historic trends to play the role that China has in recent decades in reducing global inequality. Of course, many observers thought it unlikely that Asia would see tremendous economic growth. The Swedish economist and Nobel Prize winner Gunnar Myrdal, for example, predicted in



his 1968 book, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations*, that Asia would remain poor for the foreseeable future, given its apparent overpopulation and limited technological progress. But just a decade after the publication of Myrdal's book, the region began to register exceptionally high rates of growth and became a leader in some areas of technology.

Aid is unlikely to be a significant driver of growth. The previous six decades of experience with Western aid to Africa unmistakably show that such support does not guarantee development in the country. Aid is both insufficient and irrelevant. It is insufficient because rich countries have never devoted much of their GDPs to foreign aid; the United States, the richest country in the world, currently gives away only 0.18 percent of its GDP in aid, and a significant portion of that is classified as "security related" and used for purchases of U.S. military equipment. But even if aid totals were greater, they would be irrelevant. The track record of African recipients of aid suggests that such support fails to generate meaningful economic growth. Aid is often misallocated and even stolen. It produces effects like those of the "resource curse," in which a country blessed with a particularly valuable commodity still underperforms: it experiences tremendous initial gains without any meaningful follow-up or more sustainable, broadly shared prosperity.

If Africa continues to languish, such stagnation will keep driving many people to migrate. After all, the gains from migration are enormous: a person with a median income in Tunisia who moves to France and starts earning there at, say, the 20th French income percentile would still have multiplied his earnings by almost three, in addition to creating better life chances for his children. Sub-Saharan Africans can gain even more by moving to Europe: a person earning the median income in Uganda who moves to Norway and earns at the level of the Norwegian 20th percentile will have multiplied his earnings 18-fold. The inability of African economies to catch up with wealthier peers (and thus fail to produce a future reduction in global income inequality) will spur more migration and may strengthen xenophobic, nativist political parties in rich countries, especially in Europe.

Africa's abundance of natural resources combined with its persistent poverty and weak governments will lead dominant global powers to vie over the continent. Although the West neglected Africa after the end of the Cold War, recent Chinese investments in the continent have alerted the United States and others to its importance. The U.S. Agency for International Development has indirectly flattered China by not only shifting its attention to Africa but also deciding to focus on more "brick and mortar" infrastructure projects, akin to those favored by China. African countries are learning that great-power competition might not be so bad for them after all, since they can play one superpower off another. But there is a grimmer scenario, in which the continent divides into allies and foes, who in turn compete or even go to war. That chaos would make the ideal of an African common market that could replicate the success of the European Economic Community even more remote. The prospect of an African growth surge that could meaningfully suppress global inequality in the coming years is slim.

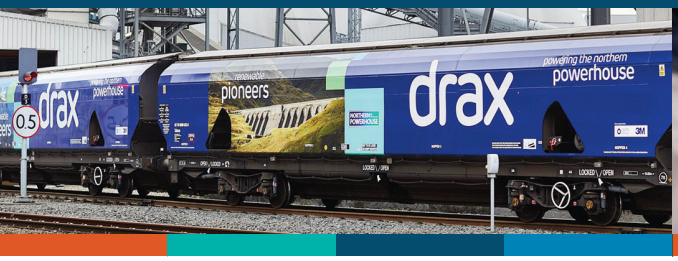
THE WORLD TO COME

Whatever direction global inequality takes, considerable change lies ahead. Unless Chinese growth slows substantially, the share of Chinese citizens among the upper reaches of the global income distribution will continue to rise, and correspondingly, the share of Westerners in that group will decrease. This shift will represent a marked change from the situation that has existed since the Industrial Revolution, with people from the West overwhelmingly represented at the top of the global income pyramid and even poor Westerners

ranked high in global terms. The gradual slide in the global income position of the lower and lower-middle classes in the West creates a new source of domestic polarization: the rich in a given Western country will remain rich in global terms, but the poor in that country will slide down the global pecking order. As for the downward trend in global inequality, it requires strong economic growth in populous African countries—but that remains unlikely. Migration out of Africa, great-power competition over the continent's resources, and the persistence of poverty and weak governments will probably lie in Africa's future as they have in its past.

And yet a more equal world remains a salutary objective. Few thinkers better grasped the importance of equality among countries than the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Adam Smith, the founder of political economy. In his magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations,* he observed how the gulf in wealth and power between the West and the rest of the world led to colonization and unjust wars: "The superiority of force [was] . . . so great on the side of the Europeans that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries," he wrote. Great disparities fueled violence and inhumanity, but Smith still saw reason for hope. "Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker," Smith imagined. "And the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another."

UNITED KINGDOM



UK plc stays on track

Brexit. The Covid-19 pandemic. The death of a beloved monarch. Over the last seven years, the United Kingdom has gone through a lot. Yet, the deeply-rooted pioneering spirit has remained alive in the country that gave birth to the Industrial Revolution.

Across all sectors of the economy, the commitment to innovate is clear. UK aerospace is thriving. British industry wants lead the world in achieving a net-zero future. Its universities remain global centers of research.

With the U.S. way ahead in the space race, the United Kingdom wants to catch up with the rest of the pack. The government, through various incentive programs, wants to reenergize the country's fledgling aerospace sector; and a small company with big aspirations has answered the call.

"It started quite a few years ago, probably about five years ago. The UK government has always had a space industry, but never had a launch industry. The government decided that we needed a fully vertically integrated space sector in order to take advantage of this new space economy," said Shetland Islands-based **SaxaVord Spaceport UK CEO Frank Strang.**

"They launched a competition to stimulate interest in space launch. It was called the UK Vertical Launch Pathfinder Program and offered a cash prize. The government was looking for a launch company, as well as a space port or a potential space port. The invitation went out to the industry," Strang added.

In another field, the UK emerges the global frontrunner in environmental protection, sustainable development, and green technology. Over the past decade, British companies have introduced Earth-saving innovations that will improve industry's relationship with the natural world.

"The science is clear. The world needs carbon removals to mitigate the worst impact of climate change. At Drax, we're developing the largest carbon removal projects in the world. We aim to remove CO2 from the atmosphere and store millions of tons of carbon permanently underground, safely and securely" said **Drax Group CEO Will Gardiner**.

"By doing this, we will be providing other forward-thinking businesses the opportunity to decarbonize by purchasing high-quality carbon removal. We will be creating jobs, helping promote healthy forests, powering homes and businesses, and playing a key role in tackling the climate emergency for the world. Can you imagine the potential of this moonshot idea?," Gardiner added.

Meanwhile, one of the UK's top institutions of higher learning is ensuring that environmental protection is hard wired in the next generation of leaders by including sustainability in its curriculum.

"We're not just teaching students, giving them lectures, giving them textbooks to read, and asking them to write essays. We are putting more emphasis on things we can do that have industrial relevance, and people can regard as authoritative sources," said **Dr. Peter Hough, Middlesex University London Associate Professor in International Politics**.

"So, we are looking more closely on potential initiatives to develop sustainability programs and how we can develop links at the local level and with local businesses, like opening up more green spaces in Hendon," he added. ■

To tackle climate change, the world needs moonshots

by Will Gardiner, CEO of Drax

On September 12, 1962, in a football stadium in Houston, President John F. Kennedy set in motion one of the most daring feats of innovation in modern history. Despite opposition from environmentalists, civil rights leaders and, even his own brother, Kennedy's "We choose to go to the moon" address unified a divided America grown weary from war and fearful for the fate of the nation.

The images of the moon landing remain in our collective imagination as one of the great achievements of humankind. However, Kennedy's vision was viewed by many as impossible and, by most, as a waste of time and money. As America's economy creaked under the weight of the Vietnam War and 20% of Americans were without adequate food, clothing or shelter, Kennedy's response from Texas was both honest and brave: "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and to do other things, not because they are easy but because they are hard".

JFK's 'moonshot' speech spurred innovation

We are once again anxious about the fate of the world and doubtful about our ability to change it, not least when it comes to the biggest challenge we face today – climate change. A World Economic Forum survey found that while 85% of people believe it is extremely or very important to address climate change, only 40% of North Americans and 31% of Europeans are optimistic about our ability to do so.

And there is ample reason for skepticism.

Four years before Kennedy's speech in Texas, from the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, Charles David Keeling began charting the concentration of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. It remains an exercise of such scientific importance that the Keeling Curve is carved into the wall of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C.

In 1958, Keeling observed that the earth's atmosphere contained 315 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide, 12% more than the preceding 6,000 years of human existence before the industrial revolution began. Today, that number is 422ppm, a figure last seen four and a half million years ago when the earth was seven degrees warmer and sea levels were up to 25 meters higher.

Our efforts to stem the bleed of carbon dioxide are struggling against the strength of our addiction to fossil fuels. At current rates, carbon emissions will increase by 14% despite knowing that to maintain a safe environment on earth, emissions must peak by 2025 and reduce by 43% by 2030. For the first time ever, we burned 8 billion tons of coal last year; or 1 ton for every man, woman and child on earth.

Our remedy – to reduce emissions as fast as possible – is not enough. If we are to stabilize Earth's climate by the end of this decade, we need new moonshots.

In the turbine hall of the UK's largest power station, engineers are pioneering a project that will not only reduce carbon dioxide emissions but remove them permanently. By 2030, the Drax power station will transform to become the world's largest carbon dioxide removal (CDR) facility by scaling a technology called BECCS (bioenergy with carbon capture and storage). BECCS begins with bioenergy.

Unlike the linear and irreversible process of adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels, carbon dioxide from bioenergy can be balanced in a closed carbon cycle within the biosphere. By adding carbon capture and storage, that carbon cycle is broken in a positive way; and carbon dioxide is permanently removed from the biosphere before being stored safely underground. The overall process will produce renewable electricity and remove millions of tons of carbon dioxide each year.

BECCS is one of only two engineered technologies that can reverse the flow of carbon dioxide. While these technologies are nascent, they must scale at unprecedented rates around the world if we are to stabilize the Earth's climate. According to the IEA, by 2030 we will need to remove 250 million tons of carbon dioxide every year through BECCS compared to the mere 1 million tons today. Across all CDR technologies, that number must rise to 10 billion tons by 2050.

Against all odds, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin set foot on the moon just seven years after Kennedy delivered his speech in Texas, proving that when governments and industry work together with urgency and determination there are no limits to what can be achieved.

It is in this spirit that we must scale up CDR technologies like BECCS to remove carbon from the atmosphere. We must do so not because it is easy, but because it is hard. Because the goal of tackling climate change is too important and time is running out; and because, as Kennedy said 60 years ago, "that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win." ■

SPONSORED SECTION

Why the World Still Needs Trade

The Case for Reimagining—Not Abandoning—Globalization

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA

The international economic architecture built after 1945 was based on a powerful idea: economic interdependence is crucial, if insufficient, for global peace and prosperity. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the predecessor to the World Trade Organization were founded in response to the three preceding decades of ceaseless instability, when the world had been devastated by two world wars, the Great Depression, and political extremism. It had also been a period of deglobalization, in which countries retreated into increasingly isolated trading blocs. In the rubble of World War II, governments sought to construct a new system that, by linking countries in a dense web of economic ties, would consign such chaos and division to history.

For much of the past 75 years, policymakers from across the world recognized the power of economic interdependence. Countries tore down trade barriers, opening their economies to one another. On balance, their record was impressive. Closer economic integration went hand

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA is Director General of the World Trade Organization.

in hand with rising global prosperity, an unprecedented reduction in poverty, and an unusually long period of great-power peace. Since 1990, the share of the world's population living in extreme poverty has fallen by three-quarters. At the center of this great leap in human well-being was a 20-fold increase in international trade volumes, which helped lift per capita incomes by a factor of 27 over the last six decades.

This economic vision is now under attack, and its achievements are in danger. A series of shocks in the space of 15 years—first the global financial crisis, then the COVID-19 pandemic, and now the war in Ukraine—have created an alternative narrative about globalization. Far from making countries economically stronger, this new line of thinking goes, globalization exposes them to excessive risks. Economic interdependence is no longer seen as a virtue; it is seen as a vice. The new mantra is that what countries need is not interdependence but independence, with integration limited at best to a small circle of friendly nations.

But dismantling economic globalization and the structures that support it would be a mistake. That is because, despite persistent rhetoric to the contrary, countries and people rely on trade more than ever in this age of "polycrisis." Moreover, international cooperation, including on trade, is necessary to meet challenges to the global commons, such as climate change, inequality, and pandemics. Globalization is not over, nor should anyone wish for it to be. But it needs to be improved and reimagined for the age ahead.

THE END OF AN ERA?

The drift away from ever-closer economic integration was reshaping trade policy even before COVID-19. Rising geopolitical tensions between the world's two biggest economies, the United States and China, saw the imposition of tit-for-tat tariffs. But the events of the past few years have supercharged the trend. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine exposed genuine vulnerabilities in global trade, causing product shortages and supply bottlenecks that harmed businesses and households alike. Talk of "decoupling" became widespread. More recently, governments have enacted a growing number of export restrictions, particularly for goods deemed strategically important, such as semiconductors and critical minerals. They have also revived industrial policies aimed at promoting domestic production.

That said, talk of deglobalization remains at odds with the trade data. In fact, global merchandise trade hit record levels in 2022.

Over three-quarters of that trade was conducted on the basic "most-favored nation" tariff terms that governments extend to all World Trade Organization (WTO) members, suggesting that the multilateral rulebook still plays a defining role in international commerce. According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, total trade between the United States and China reached an all-time high of $691 billion in 2022, which is 24 percent higher than it was in 2019. The share of intermediate inputs—goods used to produce other goods—in world exports remains roughly constant, suggesting that there has been no mass reshoring of international supply chains. Companies still make sourcing decisions based on cost and quality considerations. Policy measures could yet alter this calculus, but not overnight.

Economic interdependence is no longer seen as a virtue; it is seen as a vice.

The experience of COVID-19 also showcased the power of international trade as a shock absorber. Early in the pandemic, as demand for medical products such as masks, gloves, and nasal swabs spiked, some of the disruptions were made worse by export restrictions on such goods. But trade swiftly became a vital means for ramping up access to desperately needed supplies, from personal protective equipment to pulse oximeters to, eventually, vaccines. Even as the value of global merchandise trade shrank by nearly eight percent in 2020, trade in medical products grew by 16 percent. Trade in cloth facemasks nearly quintupled. After COVID-19 vaccines were developed, billions of doses were manufactured in supply chains cutting across as many as 19 countries. Without trade, the recovery from the pandemic—from both the immediate public health crisis and the resulting economic crisis—would have been much slower.

In other words, despite the growing movement to dismantle the system underpinning globalization, people and businesses rely on it more than ever. Advocates of deglobalization are effectively calling for the disruption of the roughly 30 percent of all global output that depends on trade, a move that would only add to the downward pressure on peoples' purchasing power across the world. In light of the strong rebound in trade that helped economies recover and kept most pandemic-induced shortages temporary, it is clear that the fundamental problem is not interdependence per se but an overconcentration of some trading relationships for certain vital products. And if the goal is more resilient supply networks that are less susceptible to weaponization by rivals, there is a better way forward.

DON'T DEGLOBALIZE, REGLOBALIZE

Deeper, deconcentrated, and more diversified global supply chains—what we at the WTO call "reglobalization"—offer a route to interdependence without overdependence. The problems exposed over the last three years can be turned into an opportunity to give countries and communities that have so far been excluded from global value chains a way in.

In a handful of sectors, some reshoring or near-shoring looks inevitable. But beyond these limited areas, such measures could come at enormous economic cost. Researchers at the WTO have estimated that if the world splits into two separate economic blocs, the resulting reduction in international trade and loss of productivity from specialization and scale economies would reduce real incomes over the long term by at least five percent on average from the current trend. The output losses would be far greater than those caused by the 2008–9 global financial crisis. Low-income countries would see real incomes drop by as much as 12 percent, dealing a massive blow to their development prospects.

What is more, large-scale reshoring could backfire by making supply chains less, not more, resilient. Negative supply shocks are likely to become more frequent in the years ahead as droughts, heat waves, and flooding wreak havoc with production and transport. Closing the door to trade would increase countries' exposure to such shocks. In contrast, a reglobalized world economy would offer countries more outside supply options and thus more resilience.

In 2022, the United States saw firsthand that domestic production alone cannot ensure supply resilience when it experienced a shortage of baby formula. Nearly all formula sold in the United States was made domestically, and when one of the four major manufacturers had to stop production at one of its plants because of bacterial contamination, heart-rending shortages ensued. What ultimately mitigated the crisis was trade: the Food and Drug Administration authorized imports of formula on an emergency basis.

"Friend shoring," the notion of moving production to geopolitical allies, is no panacea, either. Whenever someone proposes "friend shoring," I always ask, "Who is a friend?" History has plenty of examples of friends behaving in unfriendly ways, especially when it comes to each other's exports. Trade tensions can arise even among allies.

TRADING GREEN

But the case for reglobalization goes further than such practicalities. It springs from the fact that the world needs international trade to

overcome the most pressing challenges of the day, such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and war. It is often said that global problems demand global solutions. Too frequently, however, cooperation on trade is omitted from the list of those solutions.

The WTO is doing its part to rectify that omission. Last June, at our 12th ministerial conference, the organization's 164 members agreed to cut tens of billions of dollars in harmful fisheries subsidies, helping ease pressure on overexploited marine fish stocks while boosting the livelihoods of the millions of people who depend on healthy oceans. Members committed to preventing emergency food aid purchases from getting bogged down in export restrictions. They also pledged to keep food and medical supplies moving around the world, helping ensure availability and reductions in price volatility. When the war in Ukraine disrupted the supply of food, feed, and fertilizer, the WTO stepped up monitoring of related trade policies and urged members to stick to their pledges to keep markets open. As of early May 2023, around 63 of the 100 or so export-restricting measures that countries had introduced on food, feed, and fertilizer since the start of the war were still in place. Although there is much room for improvement, things are headed in the right direction.

The existential imperative of climate change is another area where trade can—and must—be part of the solution. Trade is often portrayed as damaging the environment, with concerns about emissions related to shipping, air freight, and trucking spawning initiatives to "buy local." It is true that transportation, like other carbon-intensive sectors, needs to reduce its emissions, and indeed, researchers are hard at work on alternative fuels, such as green hydrogen and green ammonia, to power cargo ships. But what critics miss is that the world cannot decarbonize without trade. It is an indispensable channel through which green technologies can be disseminated and countries can access the goods and services they need to recover from extreme weather events and adapt to a changing climate. The competition and scale efficiencies made possible by international trade and value chains are critical for driving down the costs of renewable energy technologies, accelerating progress toward the goal of net-zero emissions.

Moreover, international trade can help reduce emissions related to goods by allowing countries to specialize. Just as countries can reap economic gains by focusing on what they are relatively good at, the world can reap environmental gains if countries focus on what they are relatively green at. From the perspective of the planet, it makes sense to import energy-intensive products from places with abundant low-carbon energy

or water-intensive products from places with abundant water. For example, a recent World Bank report noted that abundant wind and sun put Latin America and the Caribbean in a good position to produce green hydrogen.

But this sort of environmental comparative advantage works only when the right policy incentives are in place, so that the environmental costs of a given activity are taken into account—"internalized," in the language of economists. Here, too, cooperation on trade has a critical role to play. As more governments take serious climate action, divergence in their policies could give rise to serious trade frictions and concerns about lost competitiveness. If these tensions go unchecked, countries could end up introducing trade restrictions and retaliating in kind to the restrictions of others. This would increase uncertainty for businesses, thus discouraging low-carbon investment. Higher trade barriers and lower investment would in turn combine to raise the cost of decarbonization—the exact opposite of what the world needs. Governments can avoid this scenario by reaching a shared understanding of how to assess and compare the equivalence of each other's climate policies—whether taxes, regulations, or subsidies—with a view to helping preempt trade conflict associated with climate measures. The WTO is at work on potential approaches that could inform this kind of global carbon pricing framework, as are the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank.

Trade can help the world achieve environmental objectives in other ways, too. Many WTO members are looking at reforming and reducing the subsidies that governments give to fossil fuel producers and consumers, and some are considering lowering trade barriers to environmental goods and services such as technologies to manage air and water pollution. Parallel to these efforts, some members are taking bold steps to incentivize investment in green technology. Although the WTO rulebook supports efforts to decarbonize, it encourages members to do so in ways that do not discriminate against others or lead to subsidy races in which trading partners are harmed. There are ways to go green and to subsidize, including by supporting research and innovation, that do not undermine a level playing field.

CLOSING THE GAP

Trade has long been a powerful force for poverty reduction as well. It permits countries with small or poor home markets to take advantage of external demand to shift people and resources out of subsistence activities and into more productive work in manufacturing, services, and agriculture.

In the decades before the COVID-19 pandemic, trade played an instrumental role in lifting over one billion people out of extreme poverty. This was not just a story of China's economic ascent. The share of the global population living on less than the equivalent of $1.90 a day declined from 36 percent in 1990 to around nine percent in 2018. Taking China out of the equation, that share over the same period still fell substantially—from 28 percent to 11 percent. The result of this boom was a dramatic rise in living standards almost everywhere. In the quarter century leading up to 2019, the gap between incomes in poor countries and those in rich economies began to narrow for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, 200 years earlier.

These trends have now been thrown into reverse. The World Bank has estimated that the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have pushed as many as 90 million more people into extreme poverty. Rich economies, which enjoyed early access to vaccines and the resources to rescue their economies through big fiscal stimulus packages, are once again leaving poor countries behind. Without global trade, it will be impossible to put development and poverty reduction back on track.

But the world needs a different, reimagined type of trade, because not all people and not all countries shared adequately in the progress of recent decades. Although the overall trends were impressive, the

top-line numbers hid a darker story. Many poor countries—most notably in Africa—lagged behind their counterparts elsewhere, even during the pre-pandemic era of convergence. Many poor people and regions in rich countries also lagged behind, since the opportunities created by better access to international markets were not always, or not often, in the same regions or sectors hurt by attendant import competition.

Even as economic inequality declined between countries and across the global population as a whole, inequality within many advanced economies increased. Trade was one of several factors at play, including technological changes that favored skilled workers and replaced many manufacturing jobs with machines. Tax, labor, and antitrust policy choices also shaped these changes, which is why inequality increased much more in some countries than in others. When the financial crisis and the painfully slow labor-market recovery that followed fed populist extremism, trade and immigrants became easy scapegoats. The political disruptions of recent years underscore the importance of cushioning the impacts of trade and technological changes on people's lives and livelihoods. By introducing active labor-market and social policies, governments can ensure that the gains from trade and technology are broadly shared while their disruptive effects are softened.

There is surely scope to bring more people and places from the margins of global production and trade networks to the mainstream. This is already starting to happen. Multinational companies are diversifying their supplier bases in pursuit of cost savings and better risk management. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Morocco, and Vietnam are expanding their participation in regional and global value chains. From Barbados to Bali to Ohio, remote services work is creating opportunities and breathing new life into struggling communities.

Taking this reglobalization process further to encompass more places and draw in more small and women-owned businesses would yield considerable dividends. It would promote growth and reduce poverty in the parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America that have good macroeconomic and business environments but weak connections to the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. It would lead to greater socioeconomic inclusion for sections of society that typically register higher rates of poverty and underemployment. And it would increase the depth, security, and flexibility of supply chains.

A strong, open, multilateral trading system is necessary for this potential next wave of trade-driven growth. But reglobalization will

look different from the export-led industrialization that transformed East Asia. With advances in automation making manufacturing a somewhat weaker engine for job creation than it used to be, services will have to play a major role alongside manufacturing and agricultural production and processing. Services are increasingly important drivers of growth and trade, expanding faster than trade in goods. This is especially true for services delivered digitally—everything from streaming games to consulting by videoconference. Cross-border trade in these services grew by an average of 8.1 percent between 2005 and 2022, compared with 5.6 percent for goods. In 2022, digitally delivered service exports reached $3.8 trillion in value, equivalent to 12 percent of all goods and services trade, up from eight percent a decade earlier.

To support this process of reglobalization, the international trade regime will need to adapt by setting forth clear rules on digital trade and promoting deeper cooperation on services trade. Gaps in existing trade rules—or the absence of shared global rules altogether—result in uncertainty and transaction costs that weigh heaviest on smaller businesses. Members of the WTO have been taking steps in the right direction. In 2021, a group of members accounting for over 90 percent of global trade in services struck an agreement on reducing regulatory barriers to services trade, and nearly 90 members, including China, the United States, and the European Union, are currently negotiating a basic set of global rules for digital trade. Regional initiatives to lower trade barriers and build connective infrastructure, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, are also useful.

Finally, maintaining peace and security is particularly salient these days. The increasing weaponization of trade relations and policy has cast doubt on the long-standing proposition that trade brings peace. Countries are understandably worried about becoming dependent on potential adversaries for critical goods. But as has been made clear, limiting trade to a few partners comes with opportunity costs: higher prices, diminished export options, less productive resource allocation, and new kinds of supply vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, deep and diversified markets make it harder to weaponize international trade, by reducing countries' dependence on any single source of supply. When the war in Ukraine cut off nearly all of Ethiopia's wheat imports from that country, Ethiopia was able to fill the gap with imports from Argentina and the United States. Europe has made up for the loss of piped Russian gas with imports of liquefied natural gas from

other sources. In a reglobalized world economy, a diffuse production base for all manner of goods would mean even fewer potential chokepoints. One prerequisite for reglobalization is a broadly open and predictable global economy, anchored in a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system.

A FORCE FOR PEACE

International trade is neither the silver bullet that can solve all security problems nor the Achilles' heel of the current security architecture. To abandon the many benefits that come with international trade would be foolhardy. There are real problems with the current trading system, but the counterfactual scenario is almost certainly worse: it is difficult to believe that international security would be better served if leading powers had no economic stake in one another's stability and prosperity and no shared institutions in which to engage. Trade between the United States and China benefits people and businesses in both countries enormously and binds the superpowers together, both bilaterally and in international forums, providing an incentive to cooperate where possible and avoid conflict.

Strategic competition is a reality of the modern world. But that world will become unlivable unless there is also strategic cooperation. The WTO's ministerial meeting last summer offered hope that the two can go together. The agreements reached there had the support of all WTO members. They worked across geopolitical and policy fault lines, each perceiving a national interest in reinforcing the world trading system.

In the three-quarters of a century since the world first embraced multilateral cooperation on trade, the trading system has underpinned rising—if still uneven—global prosperity. It has achieved its original goal of helping governments keep markets open in turbulent times. In the face of mighty shocks, from the global financial crisis to the pandemic, the world did not repeat the 1930s spiral of protectionism and depression, instead allowing cross-border demand and supply to be an engine for recovery.

Today, the multilateral trading system is part of the solution to major global challenges, from climate change to conflict to pandemic preparedness. And a reformed WTO, fit for the twenty-first century, is needed now more than ever, with rules that underpin the stability, predictability, and openness of the global trading system. If the past 15 years have taught us anything, it is that unforeseen crises surely lie ahead and that without the stabilizing force of trade, the world will almost certainly be less able to weather them.

Don't Count the Dictators Out

The Underappreciated Resilience of Today's Autocracies

LUCAN AHMAD WAY

Two thousand twenty-two was not a good year for the world's leading autocracies. In November, Chinese President Xi Jinping confronted the largest antigovernment demonstrations since the Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989. Provoked by Beijing's stringent "zero COVID" policies, protesters across the country made overtly political demands, calling for Xi's resignation and an end to one-man rule. These protests erupted just when the Chinese economy was experiencing its lowest growth rate since 1976. The government responded by suddenly abandoning its zero-COVID program—a signature Xi policy—and letting the virus spread rapidly through the population. The reversal, and the estimated one million deaths that followed it, further eroded public trust in the regime.

LUCAN AHMAD WAY is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto and a co-author, with Steven Levitsky, of *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism*.

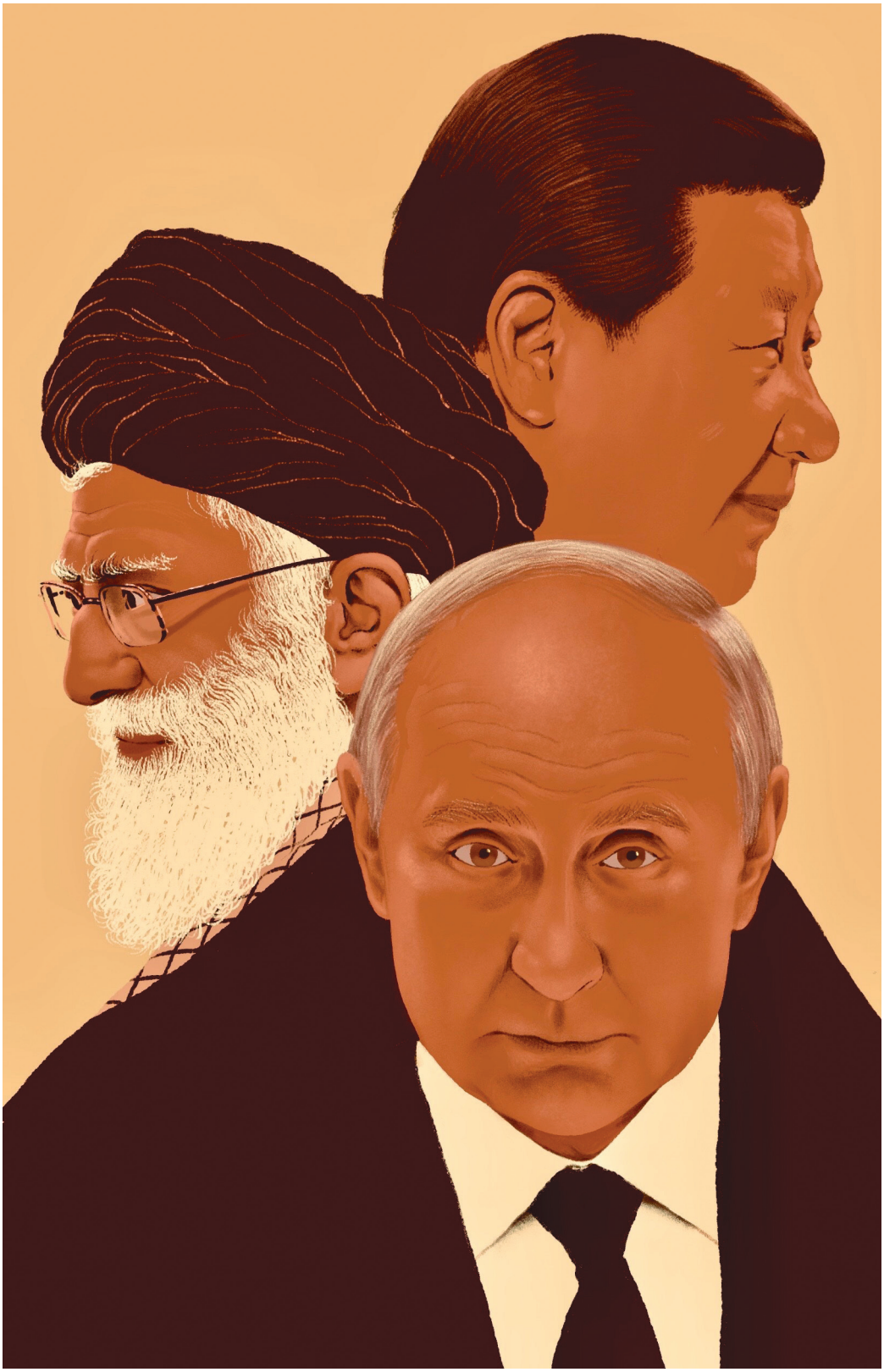


Illustration by Laura Lannes

Iran confronted even greater challenges. In September, the death of a young woman named Mahsa Amini while in police custody for "improperly" wearing her hijab sparked months of nationwide protests that targeted the heart of the regime's revolutionary identity. Thousands of protesters in more than 100 cities called for the death of the country's aging supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and an end to the Islamic Republic itself. At the end of the year, opposition activists organized a three-day general strike that nearly shut down the country—actions reminiscent of those that preceded the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979. Although the protests have since died down, large numbers of Iranian women continue to refuse to wear the hijab.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had perhaps the worst year of all. His invasion of Ukraine has been an utter disaster. The Russian army has been forced to abandon efforts to take Kyiv and has retreated from positions it gained earlier in eastern and southern Ukraine. The war has triggered unprecedented Western sanctions, resulted in roughly 200,000 Russian casualties—far larger than the number killed and wounded during Russia's decadelong occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s—and caused hundreds of thousands of citizens to flee the country. Russia's geopolitical influence is in dramatic decline. Almost overnight, Europe cut its dependence on Russian energy supplies, and Moscow has been forced to abandon efforts to influence neighboring countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

After more than a decade in which, as the journalist Anne Applebaum observed, "the bad guys" were winning, the world now seems to be turning against autocracy. Three of the biggest bad guys appear to face unprecedented challenges to their power, giving democracy the edge in the global contest with autocracy for the first time in years. But the threats to autocratic power are less significant than many hope: these three dictatorships, in particular, have hidden sources of resilience, rooted deep in their revolutionary pasts. Revolutionary origins—and in the case of Russia, the surviving legacies of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—have helped all three governments survive economic downturns, policy disasters, and sharp drops in popularity and will likely continue to strengthen them for a long time to come. Any effective strategy for countering them requires an understanding of their true nature and unique sources of resilience.

MORE ENEMIES, MORE UNITY

Today's most durable autocracies were born of social revolutions, which—in contrast to conventional power grabs—occur when activists backed by mass mobilization seize control and try to remake the state in order to radically transform the way people live, such as by eliminating private property or imposing religious rule. Although such revolutions have been extraordinarily rare—just 20 since 1900—the revolutionary autocracies they produced have had an enormous influence on world politics: the Cold War, the Vietnam War, Islamist terrorism, and the rise of China were all fueled by revolutionary autocracies. Today, such governments and their successors—a list that includes not just China, Iran, and Russia but also Afghanistan, Cuba, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Vietnam—present some of the most serious challenges to the U.S.-led liberal world order.

> Today there are virtually no dictatorships in wealthy, developed countries.

These regimes tend to be far more durable than their nonrevolutionary counterparts. Such durability results from the distinctive way they consolidate power. In contrast to many autocrats, who seek to broaden popular support and cultivate international legitimacy when they come to power, leaders of revolutionary regimes alienate large swaths of their countries' populations and antagonize neighboring countries and world powers. The Bolsheviks sought to export communist revolutions to the rest of Europe and Asia, tried to eliminate the bourgeoisie as a class, terrorized aristocrats, seized their property, and turned over their mansions to former servants. In 1917, about 50 upper-class Russian military cadets were tied up, brought to a factory, and flung into a blast furnace. Similarly, during his struggle for power in China, Mao Zedong famously declared that "a revolution is not a dinner party" and encouraged peasants to humiliate and destroy the old landowning class. In Iran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini imposed strict rules on female dress, supported the seizure of American hostages, executed thousands of his opponents, and called for an Islamist revolution throughout the Persian Gulf.

At first glance, such behavior seems irrational. Attacks on powerful interests almost always cause violent conflicts that can destroy nascent revolutionary regimes. In China and Russia, such attacks helped precipitate deadly civil wars; in Iran and Vietnam, they resulted in bloody

external wars. In some states, as in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s, such conflicts wiped out the revolutionary regimes that started them. But what didn't kill these regimes made them stronger. For those able to survive, ferocious struggles for power made them uniquely durable. Persistent existential threats united the regimes' elites. Furthermore, violent conflict wiped out alternative centers of power—including other political parties and churches—ensuring weak opposition for years to come.

These early conflicts also forced the regimes to build new and powerful security forces, such as Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Russia's Cheka (later called the KGB), that suppressed all opposition. And since revolutionary governments created their own armed forces rather than inheriting an existing army, they could fill the military with pro-regime spies and officers, which made it much harder for soldiers and their superiors to carry out coups. Finally, because civil wars often destroyed existing economic structures, they created opportunities for authoritarian governments to penetrate deep into the economy—allowing autocrats to promote economic development without falling victim to the strong independent forces that have fostered democracy in other countries.

CHINA'S LONG MARCH TO SECURITY

From one perspective, the roots of authoritarian resilience in China might seem obvious. China is a global military and economic power with a GDP more than 43 times as large as it was in 1978. Within a generation, Chinese living standards have risen dramatically, giving families access to consumer goods they could not have imagined just a few decades ago. Even with recent COVID-19 missteps and slower growth, many Chinese citizens have clear reasons to support the one-party state.

Yet such remarkable economic achievements provide an incomplete explanation for the regime's durability. For one thing, China's extraordinary economic performance was only possible because the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had earlier managed to unify the country. In the first half of the twentieth century, China had a weak, fragmented state akin to contemporary Afghanistan. The central government barely touched most of its territory, and large sections of the country were under the sway of competing warlords, imperial powers, criminal gangs, and secret societies. Before it could become an economic and military powerhouse, China first had to create a modern, unified state.

Second, the kind of spectacular economic development witnessed in China can be a double-edged sword for dictators trying to maintain a tight authoritarian grip. Rapid economic growth increases support for the government but can also sow the seeds of democracy. Economic development frequently threatens dictators by fostering the rise of independent sources of commercial, social, and political power that make it harder for leaders to monopolize control. Today, there are virtually no dictatorships in wealthy, developed countries. Setting aside Middle Eastern countries that draw incomes from natural resources—which generate fabulous wealth without the social changes associated with economic development—all but three of 54 countries the World Bank classifies as "high income" were ranked "free" by Freedom House in 2022. (The three outliers are Hungary, a competitive authoritarian regime, and the tiny states of Brunei and Singapore.)

This pattern would seem to spell trouble for the leadership of the CCP. By bringing millions out of poverty and creating a large middle class and influential business leaders, economic development in China has the potential to generate alternative centers of power that can fuel strong demands for political change. Indeed, economic development drove democratic transitions in nearby South Korea and Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s. Observers have long predicted that economic expansion in China would similarly lead to democracy.

But the Chinese regime's origins in violent social revolution have allowed it to overcome a history of state failure, as well as the unintended consequences of economic change. The CCP's long and violent struggle for power between 1927 and 1949 produced the unified state necessary for rapid growth but also ensured that economic development would not generate a strong civil society. When Mao became the leader of the CCP, his insistence on combining a struggle for power with radical social change meant that during the civil war and shortly after its end, the party carried out large-scale land reform that wiped out entrenched elites and local groups that had weakened the Chinese state for so long. These measures, and the devastation of war, permitted the CCP to penetrate parts of society that had rarely been subject to direct state control before. Although China would undergo traumatic upheaval at the hands of Mao for several decades after 1949, the unification and strengthening of the Chinese state during the revolutionary struggle created the conditions for China's eventual rise as a global economic power beginning in the 1990s.

Moreover, China's transition to communism obliterated alternatives to the ruling party and cleared the way for totalitarian rule. The party now infiltrates every nook and cranny of Chinese society, including both foreign and domestic businesses. The pervasive presence of pro-government institutions has made it very difficult for independent forces to organize. Partly as a result, economic growth has failed to strengthen independent democratic forces the way it did in South Korea and Taiwan. Despite its wealth, China has one of the weakest civil societies in the world. Thus, in the rare instances when protests have emerged—as in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the anti-zero-COVID protests in November 2022—such efforts have been hampered by disorganization and lack of coordination. Although no authoritarian regime is invincible, China remains perhaps the most durable autocracy on the globe and can withstand strong popular discontent and economic turbulence.

TENACITY AND TURMOIL

Iran's revolutionary leaders went to war against the world after they seized power in 1979. They immediately imposed clerical rule and nearly plunged the country into a civil war against anticlerical leftist insurgents. This instability encouraged Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to invade, leading to the brutal eight-year Iran-Iraq war. Meanwhile, the government demonized both the United States and the Soviet Union and became a major sponsor of terrorism in the region. These struggles ultimately strengthened the regime. Above all, the fights against Iraq and leftist insurgents transformed Khomeini's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), founded in 1979, from a ragtag group of ill-trained and ill-equipped street fighters into one of the most powerful security forces in the world, with about 150,000 troops that blanket the country. These conflicts also strengthened the Basij, a militia created in 1979 to defend the revolution against internal and external enemies. Members of the security forces have mainly been recruited from poor, highly religious families in the countryside. Like zealots of any religion, many believe their cause is worth any kind of sacrifice and violence.

Revolutionary ideology is not the only glue holding the Iranian regime together. As many analysts have pointed out, the IRGC is corrupt and has an enormous economic stake in the survival of the Islamic Republic. But material incentives are often not enough. In many other autocracies, members of security forces who have had a stake in the survival of the existing regime have nonetheless defected to avoid being on the losing side when

the regime came under pressure. During the Arab Spring in 2011, for example, the Egyptian military deserted President Hosni Mubarak, causing him to fall from power. Security forces in Serbia similarly turned on President Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, when mass protests called for his ouster. By contrast, when the clerical regime in Iran has encountered far-reaching challenges, the IRGC and other state actors have stood behind it.

And things have gotten very tough for Iran's leaders over the past decade. The regime has confronted repeated nationwide protests. In 2009, after incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hard-liner, appeared to steal the presidential election from the reformist challenger Mir Hussein Mousavi, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took to the streets and protested for months. Then, in the 2010s, increasingly severe international sanctions caused runaway inflation and skyrocketing poverty. Such conditions provoked repeated waves of protests across the country. In late 2019, protesters denounced Khamenei and set fire to numerous government sites, banks, gas stations, and security bases. And the huge demonstrations in the fall of 2022 gave expression to an even wider variety of grievances against the regime, including dissatisfaction over the economy, outrage over Islamic policies, and the regime's use of violence.

> The CCP now infiltrates every nook and cranny of Chinese society.

Yet the government has responded to each of these popular threats with the same brutality and intransigence. In 2009, the government answered protests by imprisoning and executing dissidents and holding a series of high-profile show trials of opposition activists. In 2019, police shot and killed protesters on the street. And in 2022, the Basij and the IRGC once again acted as the regime's main line of defense, killing protesters and minors, invading schools, and making thousands of arrests.

The Iranian case illustrates the critical importance of unity at the top to authoritarian survival. Historically, dictators' greatest threats have come not from mass protests but from political allies and subordinates in their own militaries. Unlike opposition activists, such insiders have the coercive muscle and the control over key state institutions that are needed to seize power. Given the mismatch in power between most governments and protesters, it is virtually impossible for challengers to succeed if there are no high-level defections from within the government. Indeed, successful opposition in autocracies has

frequently been led by politicians who deserted the regime. In numerous countries—including Romania in 1989, Kenya in 2002, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005—dictators fell in part because their allies abandoned the ruling party en masse to join the opposition. For example, Zambia's dictatorship disintegrated in 1991 when massive protests and economic collapse moved key government supporters to abandon the regime. As one defector explained, "Only a stupid fly . . . follows a dead body to the grave."

Iran's governing elite, however, has remained steadfast during similarly far-reaching economic crises and other pressures. Even reformers—insider politicians with more moderate positions on some social and political issues—have resisted breaking from the regime. At one time, opponents of clerical rule looked hopefully to figures such as Mohammad Khatami, who served as president from 1997 to 2005, and Mousavi in 2009, but these leaders refused to make a full break with the theocratic system. Indeed, a week after protests broke out in 2009, Mousavi called for a halt to demonstrations and urged supporters to remain loyal to the Islamic Republic. Such loyalty to clerical rule has helped deprive the opposition of the organization and leadership it needs to channel the country's immense popular discontent into a more serious challenge to the regime. Thus, the recent protests were largely leaderless. Although repeated protests, popular discontent, and economic crisis clearly make the regime vulnerable, the government is unlikely to fall without cracks at the top.

PUTIN'S HIDDEN INHERITANCE

Unlike communist China and Islamist Iran, Putin's Russia is not a revolutionary regime. The Soviet Union collapsed long ago, and Putin came to power via an election rather than by violent struggle. But Putin's autocracy has benefited immeasurably from the legacies of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. First, the long era of Soviet totalitarian rule effectively prevented a strong civil society from taking hold. The state that emerged from the revolution wiped out or infiltrated even the most rudimentary forms of civil society, including opposition parties, trade unions, churches, and other organizations outside the reach of the state that could have provided a foundation for democracy. Although independent economic and social forces began to emerge in the late 1980s and 1990s, they remained relatively weak, partly because the most profitable sectors of the economy continued to be vulnerable

to state interference. As a result, Russia's opposition has lacked both organization and potential sources of financing.

Second, Putin's control of Russia has been bolstered by an extensive and effective security service that can be traced directly to the political police created in 1917. It became the most powerful security force in the world, with agents in virtually every apartment block and every enterprise. Although Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev dismantled the ruling apparatus of the Communist Party, he left the KGB—where Putin began his career—largely untouched. The KGB was formally abolished in the 1990s and divided into several agencies, but its core functions and personnel were retained in what became the FSB (Federal Security Service). Today, the FSB is a bulwark of Putin's autocracy. Far larger than such organizations in many other countries and backed by millions of informers, the FSB penetrates substantial portions of Russian media, business, and civil society. According to the scholar Kevin Riehle, in a recent study of Russian intelligence, Russia now has more security personnel per capita than it did under Soviet rule. The FSB has targeted major anti-regime leaders such as Boris Nemtsov, who was brazenly assassinated in Moscow in 2015, and more recently, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny, both of whom have been imprisoned. Organized opposition is now very weak in Russia. Independent forces, weakened by 70 years of Soviet totalitarian rule, have been no match for Putin's massive security apparatus.

Russia's revolutionary legacy has also benefited Putin by reducing the likelihood of a military rebellion, even amid such a disastrous campaign as the war in Ukraine. Defeat on the battlefield, especially when it can be blamed on poor decisions by a country's leader, has often sparked military coups. Indeed, Russia's humiliation in the first months of its war led many to suggest that Putin might be overthrown by his armed forces. But as the political scientist Adam Casey has pointed out, Putin's regime has retained the Soviet practice of infiltrating the military with counterintelligence officers. This a difficult feat in most autocracies, which tend to inherit rather than create their own militaries. But the Soviets had no such hurdle, and the revolutionary legacy has given Putin the capacity to identify potential military opposition, making it much harder for the armed forces to challenge him.

NO REVOLUTION IS FOREVER

Of course, even the most powerful revolutionary autocracies do not last forever, and China, Iran, and Russia are not invincible. The regimes

in Tehran and Moscow are more vulnerable than the one in Beijing. Until now, the Iranian regime has remained cohesive despite economic crisis and popular unrest, but that does not mean it can do so indefinitely. If the economy continues to worsen and dissatisfaction grows, cracks may eventually begin to form within the regime. The potential for splits will likely increase in the medium term as the original, fanatical generation of revolutionaries who came of age during the struggle for power dies off. As in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s, the younger officials who replace them may be less ideological and therefore more likely to defect in times of crisis. Furthermore, Khamenei, who is in ill health and 84 years old, has not named a successor. It is possible—albeit unlikely, given the strength of hard-line forces—that his death might catalyze divisions within the regime.

Iran illustrates the critical importance of unity at the top to authoritarian survival.

The Russian government's vulnerability comes from the regime's concentration of power in one man's hands. Today, Putin rules largely unconstrained by other institutions or actors. His regime was not built on the kind of ideology that in revolutionary Iran has motivated intense loyalty and sacrifice, nor on an established ruling party such as the one in China, which would provide a source of durability beyond a single leader. Because everything depends on Putin, his eventual death or incapacity may throw the regime into disarray. It is anybody's guess who might succeed him. Such uncertainty is common in personalist regimes. At the same time, given the balance of forces between state and society, it is unlikely that such a transition will result in democracy, at least in the near term.

The Chinese regime remains stronger than its Iranian and Russian counterparts. China's economy is obviously in much better shape than Iran's. And although Xi's power is less constrained than that of his recent predecessors, his rule is far less personalized than Putin's. Xi's regime remains grounded in a strong and institutionalized party-state bureaucracy that has no equivalent in Russia. Certainly, China is not without its problems. In addition to low economic growth and ill-considered COVID policies, extensive corruption has in recent years led some observers to argue that the CCP is "atrophying," "fragile," and in a period of "late-stage decay." Xi's intense anticorruption campaign over the last decade has seemingly reduced, but by no means elim-

inated, government malfeasance. Regardless, the regime's powerful bureaucracy, extraordinary repressive capacity, and weak civil society will likely insulate the government from future corruption scandals or other crises.

Confronting revolutionary governments is complicated. Hard-line strategies from regime opponents in the West often reinforce cohesion and provide autocracies with convenient scapegoats. Indeed, decades of sanctions against Cuba have arguably helped solidify and legitimize the regime founded in 1959 by Fidel Castro. Furthermore, open confrontation with a country as economically and politically powerful as China is untenable.

Yet the West is far from powerless. Although increasingly severe economic sanctions imposed on Iran since the early 2010s have not caused the regime to collapse, they have nonetheless weakened it by fueling an economic crisis, which has led to popular dissatisfaction and repeated protests over the last decade. In Russia, unprecedented sanctions have so far failed to destabilize Putin's regime, but they have isolated him internationally, reduced Russian growth, and possibly decreased the country's capacity to wage war in Ukraine.

Putin's actions in Ukraine starkly illustrate the dangers of failing to confront powers that challenge international liberal norms. A desire to avoid conflict led Germany and other Western powers to accommodate Russia's perceived geopolitical interests and pursue engagement even after Russia invaded and illegally annexed Crimea in 2014. Yet such efforts did nothing to curb Russia's regional ambitions, and the relatively mild Western response almost certainly encouraged Putin to invade the rest of Ukraine in 2022. Today, all but a few European countries recognize the need to challenge Russia head-on.

Revolutionary autocrats and their successors present one of today's most intractable challenges to international order. Putin's decision to invade Ukraine despite Russia's close ties to Europe demonstrates that economic linkage and common material interests are not sufficient to preserve the liberal world order. Democracies must instead unite and mount a defense of democratic values—providing military support for democracies under attack, as well as diplomatic and material assistance for those opposing dictatorship. Although these efforts will not topple revolutionary dictatorships in the short term, a more proactive and coordinated resistance to autocracy will better equip the West to contain and perhaps even defeat them in the long term.

China Is Ready for a World of Disorder

America Is Not

MARK LEONARD

In March, at the end of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin stood at the door of the Kremlin to bid his friend farewell. Xi told his Russian counterpart, "Right now, there are changes—the likes of which we haven't seen for 100 years—and we are the ones driving these changes together." Putin, smiling, responded, "I agree."

The tone was informal, but this was hardly an impromptu exchange: "Changes unseen in a century" has become one of Xi's favorite slogans since he coined it in December 2017. Although it might seem generic, it neatly encapsulates the contemporary Chinese way of thinking about the emerging global order—or, rather, disorder. As China's power has grown, Western policymakers and analysts have tried to determine what kind of world China wants and what kind of global order Beijing aims to build with its power. But it is becoming clear that rather than

MARK LEONARD is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations and the author of *What Does China Think?* and *The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict.*

trying to comprehensively revise the existing order or replace it with something else, Chinese strategists have set about making the best of the world as it is—or as it soon will be.

While most Western leaders and policymakers try to preserve the existing rules-based international order, perhaps updating key features and incorporating additional actors, Chinese strategists increasingly define their goal as survival in a world without order. The Chinese leadership, from Xi on down, believes that the global architecture that was erected in the aftermath of World War II is becoming irrelevant and that attempts to preserve it are futile. Instead of seeking to save the system, Beijing is preparing for its failure.

Although China and the United States agree that the post–Cold War order is over, they are betting on very different successors. In Washington, the return of great-power competition is thought to require revamping the alliances and institutions at the heart of the post–World War II order that helped the United States win the Cold War against the Soviet Union. This updated global order is meant to incorporate much of the world, leaving China and several of its most important partners—including Iran, North Korea, and Russia—isolated on the outside.

But Beijing is confident that Washington's efforts will prove futile. In the eyes of Chinese strategists, other countries' search for sovereignty and identity is incompatible with the formation of Cold War–style blocs and will instead result in a more fragmented, multipolar world in which China can take its place as a great power.

Ultimately, Beijing's understanding may well be more accurate than Washington's and more closely attuned to the aspirations of the world's most populous countries. The U.S. strategy won't work if it amounts to little more than a futile quest to update a vanishing order, driven by a nostalgic desire for the symmetry and stability of a bygone era. China, by contrast, is readying itself for a world defined by disorder, asymmetry, and fragmentation—a world that, in many ways, has already arrived.

SURVIVOR: BEIJING

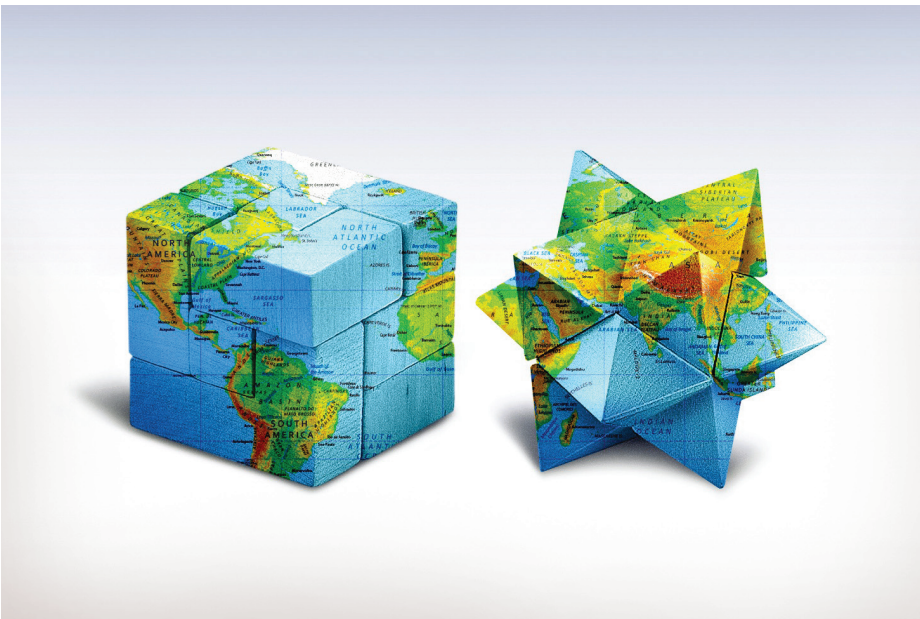
The very different responses of China and the United States to Russia's invasion of Ukraine revealed the divergence in Beijing's and Washington's thinking. In Washington, the dominant view is that Russia's actions are a challenge to the rules-based order, which must be strengthened in response. In Beijing, the dominant opinion is that

the conflict shows the world is entering a period of disorder, which countries will need to take steps to withstand.

The Chinese perspective is shared by many countries, especially in the global South, where Western claims to be upholding a rules-based order lack credibility. It is not simply that many governments had no say in creating these rules and therefore see them as illegitimate. The problem is deeper: these countries also believe that the West has applied its norms selectively and revised them frequently to suit its own interests or, as the United States did when it invaded Iraq in 2003, simply ignored them. For many outside the West, the talk of a rules-based order has long been a fig leaf for Western power. It is only natural, these critics maintain, that now that Western power is declining, this order should be revised to empower other countries.

Hence Xi's claim that "changes unseen in a century" are coming to pass. This observation is one of the guiding principles of "Xi Jinping Thought," which has become China's official ideology. Xi sees these changes as part of an irreversible trend toward multipolarity as the East rises and the West declines, accelerated by technology and demographic shifts. Xi's core insight is that the world is increasingly defined by disorder rather than order, a situation that in his view harks back to the nineteenth century, another era characterized by global instability and existential threats to China. In the decades after China's defeat by Western powers in the First Opium War in 1839, Chinese thinkers, including the diplomat Li Hongzhang—sometimes referred to as "China's Bismarck"—wrote of "great changes unseen in over 3,000 years." These thinkers observed with concern the technological and geopolitical superiority of their foreign adversaries, which inaugurated what China now considers to be a century of humiliation. Today, Xi sees the roles as reversed. It is the West that now finds itself on the wrong side of fateful changes and China that has the chance to emerge as a strong and stable power.

Other ideas with roots in the nineteenth century have also experienced a renaissance in contemporary China, among them social Darwinism, which applied Charles Darwin's concept of "the survival of the fittest" to human societies and international relations. In 2021, for instance, the Research Center for a Holistic View of National Security, a government-backed body linked to the Chinese security ministry, published *National Security in the Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, edited by the economist Yuncheng Zhang. The book, part of a series explaining the new national security law, claims that the state is like a biological



organism that must evolve or die—and that China's challenge is to survive. And this line of thinking has taken hold. One Chinese academic told me that geopolitics today is a "struggle for survival" between fragile and inward-looking superpowers—a far cry from the expansive and transformative visions of the Cold War superpowers. Xi has adopted this framework, and Chinese government statements are full of references to "struggle," an idea that is found in communist rhetoric but also in social Darwinist writings.

This notion of survival in a dangerous world necessitates the development of what Xi describes as "a holistic approach to national security." In contrast to the traditional concept of "military security," which was limited to countering threats from land, air, sea, and space, the holistic approach to security aims to counter all challenges, whether technical, cultural, or biological. In an age of sanctions, economic decoupling, and cyberthreats, Xi believes that everything can be weaponized. As a result, security cannot be guaranteed by alliances or multilateral institutions. Countries must therefore do all that they can to safeguard their own people. To that end, in 2021, the Chinese government backed the creation of a new research center dedicated to this holistic approach, tasking it with considering all aspects of China's security strategy. Under Xi, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is increasingly conceived of as a shield against chaos.

JUANJO GASULL

CLASHING VISIONS

Chinese leaders see the United States as the principal threat to their survival and have developed a hypothesis to explain their adversary's actions. Beijing believes that Washington is responding to domestic polarization and its loss of global power by ramping up its competition with China. U.S. leaders, according to this thinking, have decided that it is only a matter of time before China becomes more powerful than the United States, which is why Washington is trying to pit Beijing against the entire democratic world. Chinese intellectuals, therefore, speak of a U.S. shift from engagement and partial containment to "total competition," spanning politics, economics, security, ideology, and global influence.

Chinese strategists have watched the United States try to use the war in Ukraine to cement the divide between democracies and autocracies. Washington has rallied its partners in the G-7 and NATO, invited East Asian allies to join the NATO meeting in Madrid, and forged new security partnerships, including AUKUS, a trilateral pact among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), which aligns Australia, India, and Japan with the United States. Beijing is particularly concerned that Washington's engagement in Ukraine will lead it to be more assertive on Taiwan. One scholar said he feared that Washington is gradually trading its "one China" policy—under which the United States agrees to regard the People's Republic of China as the only legal government of Taiwan and the mainland—for a new approach that one Chinese interlocutor called "one China and one Taiwan." This new kind of institutionalization of ties between the United States and its partners, implicitly or explicitly aimed at containing Beijing, is seen in China as a new U.S. attempt at alliance building that brings Atlantic and European partners into the Indo-Pacific. It is, Chinese analysts believe, yet another instance of the United States' mistaken belief that the world is once more dividing itself into blocs.

With only North Korea as a formal ally, China cannot win a battle of alliances. Instead, it has sought to make a virtue of its relative isolation and tap into a growing global trend toward nonalignment among middle powers and emerging economies. Although Western governments take pride in the fact that 141 countries have supported UN resolutions condemning the war in Ukraine, Chinese foreign policy thinkers, including the international relations professor and

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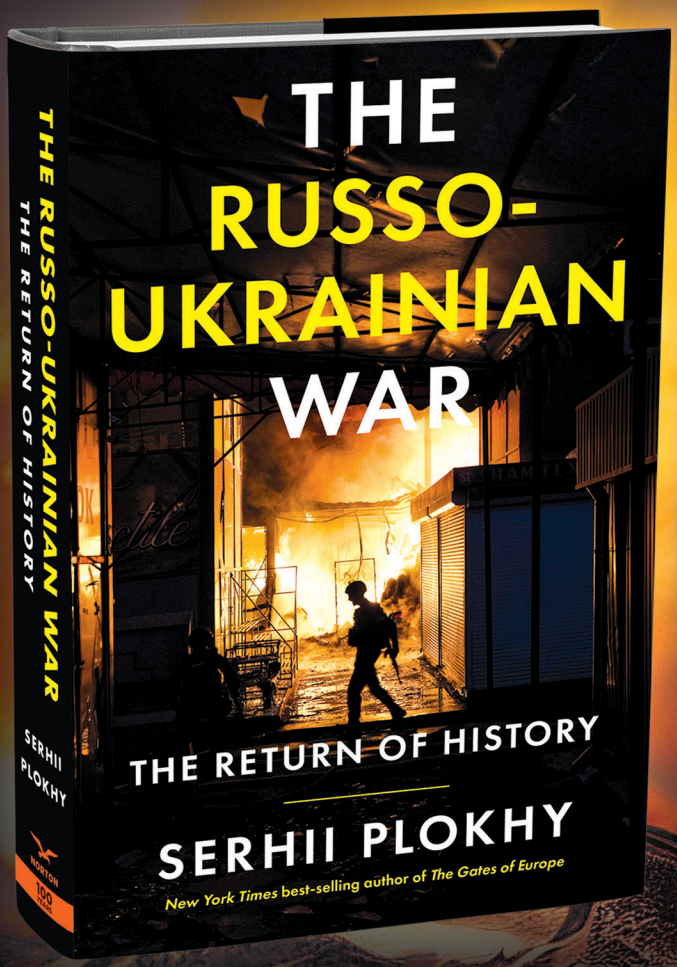

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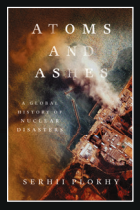

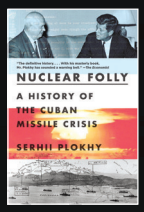

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media commentator Chu Shulong, argue that the number of countries enforcing sanctions against Russia is a better indication of the power of the West. By that metric, he calculates that the Western bloc contains only 33 countries, with 167 countries refusing to join in the attempt to isolate Russia. Many of these states have bad memories of the Cold War, a period when their sovereignty was squeezed by competing superpowers. As one prominent Chinese foreign policy strategist explained to me, "The United States isn't declining, but it is only good at talking to Western countries. The big difference between now and the Cold War is that [then] the West was very effective at mobilizing developing countries against [the Soviet Union] in the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Africa."

To capitalize on waning U.S. influence in these regions, China has sought to demonstrate its support for countries in the global South. In contrast to Washington, which Beijing sees as bullying countries into picking sides, China's outreach to the developing world has prioritized investments in infrastructure. It has done so through international initiatives, some of which are already partially developed. These include the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, which invest billions of dollars of state and private-sector money in other countries' infrastructure and development. Others are new, including the Global Security Initiative, which Xi launched in 2022 to challenge U.S. dominance. Beijing is also working to expand the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a security, defense, and economic group that brings together major players in Eurasia, including India, Pakistan, and Russia and is in the process of admitting Iran.

STUCK IN THE PAST?

China is confident that the United States is mistaken in its assumption that a new cold war has broken out. Accordingly, it is seeking to move beyond Cold War–style divides. As Wang Honggang, a senior official at a think tank affiliated with China's Ministry of State Security, put it, the world is moving away from "a center-periphery structure for the global economy and security and towards a period of polycentric competition and co-operation." Wang and like-minded scholars do not deny that China is also trying to become a center of its own, but they argue that because the world is emerging from a period of Western hegemony, the establishment of a new Chinese center will actually lead to a greater pluralism of ideas rather than a

Chinese world order. Many Chinese thinkers link this belief with the promise of a future of "multiple modernity." This attempt to create an alternative theory of modernity, in contrast to the post–Cold War formulation of liberal democracy and free markets as the epitome of modern development, is at the core of Xi's Global Civilization Initiative. This high-profile project is intended to signal that unlike the United States and European countries, which lecture others on subjects such as climate change and LGBTQ rights, China respects the sovereignty and civilization of other powers.

For many decades, China's engagement with the world was largely economic. Today, China's diplomacy goes well beyond matters of trade and development. One of the most dramatic and instructive examples of this shift is China's growing role in the Middle East and North Africa. This region was formerly dominated by the United States, but as Washington has stepped back, Beijing has moved in. In March, China pulled off a major diplomatic coup by brokering a truce between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Whereas Chinese involvement in the region was once limited to its status as a consumer of hydrocarbons and an economic partner, Beijing is now a peacemaker busily engaged in building diplomatic and even military relationships with key players. Some Chinese scholars regard the Middle East today as "a laboratory for a post-American world." In other words, they believe that the region is what the entire world will look like in the next few decades: a place where, as the United States declines, other global powers, such as China, India, and Russia, compete for influence, and middle powers, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, flex their muscles.

> Instead of seeking to save the global system, Beijing is preparing for its failure.

Many in the West doubt China's ability to achieve this goal, mostly because Beijing has struggled to win over potential collaborators. In East Asia, South Korea is moving closer to the United States; in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is developing closer relations with Washington to protect itself from Beijing; and there has been an anti-Chinese backlash in many African countries, where complaints about Beijing's colonial behavior are rife. Although some countries, including Saudi Arabia, want to strengthen their ties with China, they are motivated at least in part by a desire for the United States to

reengage with them. But these examples should not mask the broader trend: Beijing is becoming more active and steadily more ambitious.

SPARE WHEELS AND BODY LOCKS

Economic competition between China and the United States is also increasing. Many Chinese thinkers predicted that the election of U.S. President Joe Biden in 2020 would lead to improved relations with Beijing, but they have been disappointed: the Biden administration has been much more aggressive toward China than they expected. One senior Chinese economist likened Biden's pressure campaign against the Chinese technology sector, which includes sanctions on Chinese technology companies and chip-making firms, to U.S. President Donald Trump's actions against Iran. Many Chinese commentators have argued that Biden's desire to freeze Beijing's technological development to preserve the United States' edge is no different than Trump's efforts to stop Tehran's development of nuclear weapons. A consensus has formed in Beijing that Washington's goal is not to make China play by the rules; it is to stop China from growing.

This is incorrect: both Washington and the European Union have made it clear that they do not intend to shut China out of the global economy. Nor do they want to fully decouple their economies from China's. Instead, they seek to ensure that their businesses do not share sensitive technologies with Beijing and to reduce their reliance on Chinese imports in critical sectors, including telecommunications, infrastructure, and raw materials. Thus, Western governments increasingly talk of "reshoring" and "friend shoring" production in such sectors or at least diversifying supply chains by encouraging companies to base production in countries such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Xi's response has been what he calls "dual circulation." Instead of thinking about China as having a single economy linked to the world through trade and investment, Beijing has pioneered the idea of a bifurcated economy. One-half of the economy—driven by domestic demand, capital, and ideas—is about "internal circulation," making China more self-reliant in terms of consumption, technology, and regulations. The other half—"external circulation"—is about China's selective contacts with the rest of the world. Simultaneously, even as it decreases its dependence on others, Beijing wants to boost the

dependence of other players on China so that it can use these links to increase its power and exert pressure. These ideas have the potential to reshape the global economy.

The influential Chinese economist Yu Yongding has explained the notion of dual circulation with two new concepts: "the spare wheel" and "the body lock." Following the "spare wheel" concept, China should have ready alternatives if it loses access to natural resources, components, and critical technologies. This idea has come in response to the increasing use of Western sanctions, which Beijing has watched with concern. The Chinese government is now working to shield itself from any attempts to cut it off in case of a conflict by making enormous investments in critical technologies, including artificial intelligence and semiconductors. But Beijing is also attempting to exploit the new reality to reduce the global economy's reliance on Western economic demand and the U.S.-led financial system. At home, the CCP is promoting a shift from export-led growth to growth driven by domestic demand; elsewhere, it is promoting the yuan as an alternative to the dollar. Accordingly, the Russians are increasing their yuan reserve holdings, and Moscow no longer uses the dollar when trading with China. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has recently agreed to use national currencies, rather than just the dollar, for trade among its member states. Although these developments are limited, Chinese leaders are hopeful that the weaponization of the U.S. financial system and the massive sanctions against Russia will lead to further disorder and increase other countries' willingness to hedge against the dollar's dominance.

The "body lock" is a wrestling metaphor. It means that Beijing should make Western companies reliant on China, thereby making decoupling more difficult. That is why it is working to bind as many countries as possible to Chinese systems, norms, and standards. In the past, the West struggled to make China accept its rules. Now, China is determined to make others bow to its norms, and it has invested heavily in boosting its voice in various international standard-setting bodies. Beijing is also using its Global Development and Belt and Road Initiatives to export its model of subsidized state capitalism and Chinese standards to as many countries as possible. Whereas China's objective was once integration into the global market, the collapse of the post–Cold War international order and the return of nineteenth-century-style disorder have altered the CCP's approach.

Xi has therefore invested heavily in self-reliance. But as many Chinese intellectuals point out, the changes in Chinese attitudes toward globalization have been driven as much by domestic economic challenges as by tensions with the United States. In the past, China's large, young, and cheap labor force was the principal driver of the country's growth. Now, its population is aging rapidly, and it needs a new economic model, one built on boosting consumption. As the economist George Magnus points out, however, doing so requires raising wages and pursuing structural reforms that would upset China's delicate societal power balance. Rekindling population growth, for instance, would require substantial upgrades to the country's underdeveloped social security system, which in turn would need to be paid for with unpopular tax increases. Promoting innovation would require a reduction of the role of the state in the economy, which runs counter to Xi's instincts. Such changes are hard to imagine in the current circumstances.

A WORLD DIVIDED?

Between 1945 and 1989, decolonization and the division between the Western powers and the Soviet bloc defined the world. Empires dissolved into dozens of states, often as the result of small wars. But although decolonization transformed the map, the more powerful force was the ideological competition of the Cold War. After winning their independence, most countries quickly aligned themselves with either the democratic bloc or the communist bloc. Even those countries that did not want to choose sides nevertheless defined their identity in reference to the Cold War, forming a "nonaligned movement."

Both trends are in evidence today, and the United States believes that this history is repeating itself as policymakers try to revive the strategy that succeeded against the Soviet Union. It is, therefore, dividing the world and mobilizing its allies. Beijing disagrees, and it is pursuing policies suited to its bet that the world is entering an era in which self-determination and multialignment will trump ideological conflict.

Beijing's judgment is more likely to be accurate because the current era differs from the Cold War era in three fundamental ways. First, today's ideologies are much weaker. After 1945, both the United States and the Soviet Union offered optimistic and compelling visions of the future that appealed to elites and workers worldwide. Contemporary China has no such message, and the traditional U.S. vision of

liberal democracy has been greatly diminished by the Iraq war, the global financial crisis of 2008, and the presidency of Donald Trump, all of which made the United States seem less successful, less generous, and less reliable. Moreover, rather than offering starkly different and opposing ideologies, China and the United States increasingly resemble each other on matters from industrial policy and trade to technology and foreign policy. Without ideological messages capable of creating international coalitions, Cold War–style blocs cannot form.

Second, Beijing and Washington do not enjoy the same global dominance that the Soviet Union and the United States did after 1945. In 1950, the United States and its major allies (NATO countries, Australia, and Japan) and the communist world (the Soviet Union, China, and the Eastern bloc) together accounted for 88 percent of global GDP. But today, these groups of countries combined account for only 57 percent of global GDP. Whereas nonaligned countries' defense expenditures were negligible as late as the 1960s (about one percent of the global total), they are now at 15 percent and growing fast.

> With only North Korea as a formal ally, China cannot win a battle of alliances.

Third, today's world is extremely interdependent. At the beginning of the Cold War, there were very few economic links between the West and the countries behind the Iron Curtain. The situation today could not be more different. Whereas trade between the United States and the Soviet Union remained at around one percent of both countries' total trade in the 1970s and 1980s, trade with China today makes up almost 16 percent of both the United States' and the EU's total trade balance. This interdependence prohibits the formation of the stable alignment of blocs that characterized the Cold War. What is more likely is a permanent state of tension and shifting allegiances.

China's leaders have made an audacious strategic bet by preparing for a fragmented world. The CCP believes the world is moving toward a post-Western order not because the West has disintegrated but because the consolidation of the West has alienated many other countries. In this moment of change, it may be that China's stated willingness to allow other countries to flex their muscles may make Beijing a more attractive partner than Washington, with its demands for ever-closer alignment. If the world truly is entering a phase of disorder, China could be best placed to prosper.

India as It Is

Washington and New Delhi Share Interests, Not Values

DANIEL MARKEY

It has been a ritual for decades. Whenever American policymakers travel to India, they sing paeans to the beauty of Indian politics, to the country's diversity, and to the shared values connecting—in the words of multiple U.S. presidents—"the world's oldest democracy" and "the world's largest democracy." This rhetoric may be gauzy, and it is certainly grandiose. But to Washington, it is not empty. In the view of U.S. policymakers, common democratic principles will be the foundation of an enduring U.S.-Indian relationship, one with broad strategic significance. The world's two biggest democracies, they say, can't help but have similar worldviews and interests.

"Our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make common cause against a common enemy," U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt wrote to Mohandas Gandhi,

DANIEL MARKEY is Senior Adviser in the South Asia Program at the United States Institute of Peace. From 2003 to 2007, he was a member of the U.S. State Department Policy Planning Staff. He is the author of *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia*.

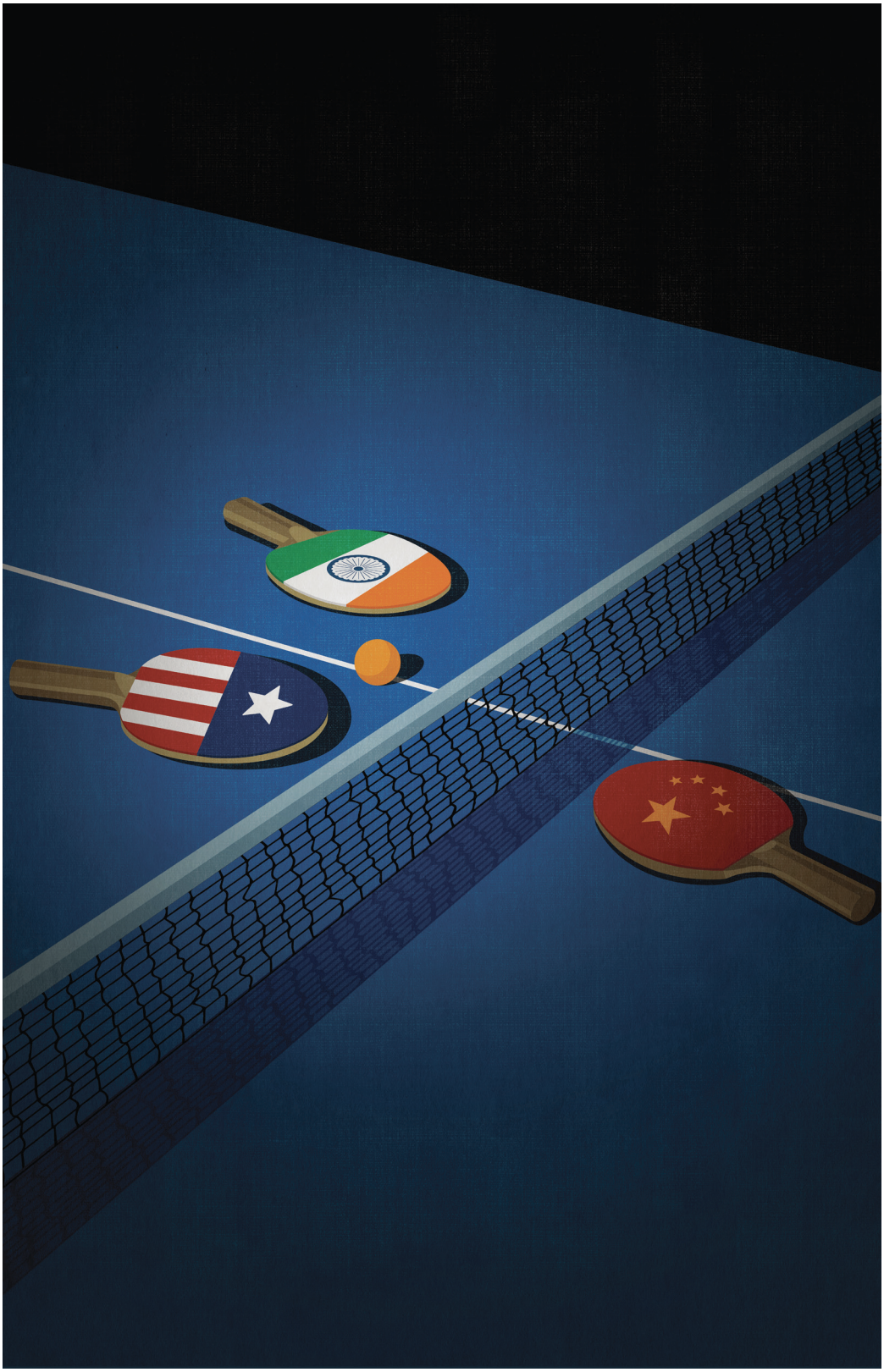

Illustration by Benedetto Cristofani

then the de facto leader of India's independence movement, during World War II. During the Cold War, successive presidential administrations tried to get New Delhi to stand against Moscow by arguing that, as a democracy, India was a natural enemy of the Soviet Union. When President George W. Bush struck a breakthrough civilian nuclear deal with India in 2005, he declared that India's democratic system meant that the two states were "natural partners" united "by deeply held values."

Yet again and again, India has disappointed American hopes. Gandhi, for example, frustrated Roosevelt by prioritizing India's struggle for freedom against the British Empire over the war against imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. New Delhi not only refused to align with Washington during the Cold War; it forged warm ties with Moscow instead. Even after the Cold War ended and India began strengthening its relations with the United States, New Delhi maintained strong connections to the Kremlin. It has refused to work with the United States on Iran, and it has made nice with Myanmar's military regime. Most recently, it has refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Hindu nationalism at home leads India to promote illiberal aims abroad.

If making democratic values the cornerstone of the U.S.-Indian relationship has always been a dubious strategy, today it is clearly doomed—because the very notion of common values has itself come to look fanciful. Ever since Narendra Modi became the Indian prime minister nine years ago, India's status as a democracy has become increasingly suspect. The "world's largest democracy" has seen an upsurge in violence directed at its Muslim minority, often whipped up by prominent politicians. It is trying to strip citizenship from millions of Muslim residents. It is muzzling the press and silencing opposition figures. The Biden administration, having cast itself as a vocal champion of democratic ideals, therefore finds itself on shaky ground whenever it characterizes the United States' partnership with India as one of shared values.

But it continues to do just that. In January, for example, the White House declared that the two states' joint technology initiatives were "shaped by our shared democratic values and respect for universal human rights." In June, Modi will visit Washington, D.C., for a formal state dinner meant to affirm "the warm bonds of family and friendship" that link the two countries. In February, however, the Indian government made it difficult for a leading Indian think tank

to raise money, a major blow to intellectual freedom. In March, Modi's party removed one of India's most prominent opposition politicians from Parliament—explicitly because he insulted the prime minister.

Yet even as the two countries' shared values have grown weaker, their shared material interests have only gotten stronger. India and the United States now have a clear, common geopolitical foe in China, and each understands that the other can help it win its competition against Beijing. For the United States, India is a massive, pivotal power in Asia that sits astride critical maritime routes and shares a long, contested land border with China. For India, the United States is an attractive source of advanced technology, education, and investment. New Delhi may still have close ties with Moscow, but the uncertain quality and reliability of Russian arms mean that India is more open than ever to buying weapons from the West instead.

To capitalize on these complementary material interests, however, the United States must dispense with the idea that shared values can provide the bedrock of a strong relationship, justifying its high tolerance for New Delhi's behavior on the basis of a bet on long-term convergence. Rather than considering India an ally in the fight for global democracy, it must see that India is an ally of convenience. This shift will not be easy, given that Washington has spent decades looking at New Delhi through rose-colored glasses. But the pivot will encourage both sides to understand that their relationship is ultimately transactional—and allow them to get down to business.

BAD BETS

American leaders, especially liberal ones, have long believed that democratic institutions are a defining feature of India's identity—and the reason why New Delhi deserves Washington's support. In 1958, for example, then Senator John Kennedy introduced a bipartisan resolution to increase assistance to India, premised on the idea that it was vital for the United States to support a fledgling democracy against communist encroachment. India's "democratic future is delicately and dangerously poised," Kennedy declared in a landmark speech. "It would be catastrophic if its leadership were now humiliated in its quest for Western assistance when its cause is good."

As the former diplomat Dennis Kux wrote in *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies*, "The effort succeeded." During President Dwight Eisenhower's second term, Kux notes, "US assistance grew substantially, surging from about $400 million in 1957, to a record $822

million in 1960." Eisenhower himself seemed committed to India's democratic future. As the president stated in remarks at the opening of the World Agriculture Fair in New Delhi in December 1959, "Whatever strengthens India, my people are convinced, strengthens us, a sister republic dedicated to peace." Six months later, Eisenhower signed a breakthrough multiyear deal with India to deliver $1.28 billion in food aid under the United States' Food for Peace program, because India's domestic farmers were routinely unable to meet the country's food needs.

But if Kennedy and Eisenhower hoped that praising India would turn New Delhi into an ally, they were sorely mistaken. In 1954, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had explicitly declared that his country would remain nonaligned in the Cold War, rankling Eisenhower. Kennedy, as president, hoped he could bring India closer by having Nehru visit Washington in 1961, but the trip changed nothing. The prime minister rebuffed all his efforts to bring India into the United States' orbit.

As Kux recounts, Kennedy's Cold War successors were similarly frustrated by New Delhi. President Lyndon Johnson found Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's 1966 criticism of U.S. involvement in Vietnam to be particularly galling; his ambassador to India later recalled that the president's reaction ranged "from the violent to the obscene." Gandhi's subsequent decision, in 1971, to conclude a "Friendship Treaty" with Moscow was later described by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as a "bombshell" that threw "a lighted match into a powder keg," inflaming relations between India and Pakistan. And in January 1980, when India's permanent ambassador to the United Nations effectively endorsed the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, President Jimmy Carter was livid. Carter's ambassador in New Delhi told Gandhi "what a devastating statement it had been from the American point of view and what a terrible backlash it had caused in the United States."

Nonetheless, U.S. policymakers often praised India in the following decades, and policymakers continued to argue that India's democratic principles made it a good partner. In his address to India's Parliament in 2000, President Bill Clinton asserted that the strength of India's democracy was the first of several important lessons it had taught the world. The administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama routinely employed the "oldest and largest democracies" formulation to describe Washington and New Delhi and their longtime ties. In a 2010 speech to the Indian Parliament, Obama repeatedly stressed the unique bond shared by "two strong democracies." He then

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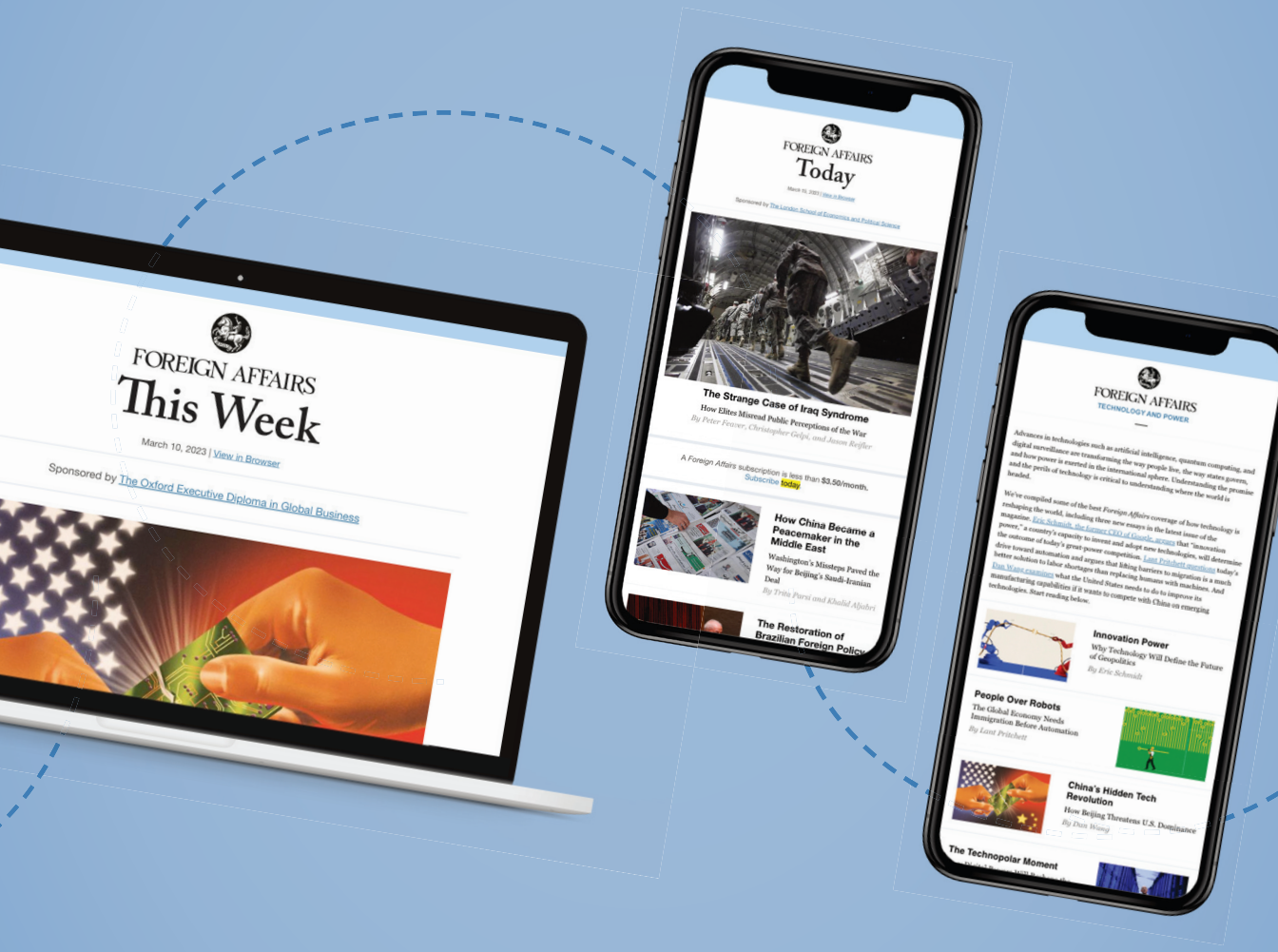

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endorsed India's effort to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, suggesting that cooperation between India and the United States on the council would strengthen "the foundations of democratic governance, not only at home but abroad."

Obama's Security Council reform has yet to materialize, but it is difficult to see how India's performance at the UN would ever live up to U.S. expectations. In the UN General Assembly from 2014 to 2019, only 20 percent of India's votes were coincident with those of the United States. Even when votes on Israeli and Palestinian issues (on which the two states are even further apart) are excluded, the figure rises to only 24 percent. By comparison, France voted with the United States 57 percent of the time overall and 67 percent of the time when Israeli and Palestinian issues were left out. This divergence shouldn't be surprising; India has routinely walked away from the United States' biggest international initiatives. It has never joined a Washington-led trade agreement, for example. And it has never given much more than lip service to Washington's drives to expand democracy, whether in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, during the Bush administration's efforts to promote the so-called freedom agenda, or during the Arab Spring of the Obama years.

U.S. cooperation with India must be tightly targeted to countering China.

Despite these disappointments, the Biden administration has continued to push for closer ties with India, leaning hard into the two states' supposedly common values as it makes its case. President Joe Biden invited Modi to Washington's two democracy summits, and the prime minister delivered remarks at each. In a May 2022 meeting with Modi, Biden said that cooperation between India and the United States is built on their shared "commitment to representative democracy." When Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited India in July 2021, he said that "the relationship between our two countries is so important and so strong because it is a relationship between our democracies." And on a March 2023 trip to New Delhi, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo praised Modi as an "unbelievable visionary" and declared that the two states were united by democratic principles.

But yet again, New Delhi has frustrated the White House on policies related to liberal values. It has, for instance, maintained ties with and sold weapons to the military junta that ousted Myanmar's democratic government in 2021. New Delhi plays an active role in

multilateral groups critical of the United States and the West, such as the BRICS, which also includes Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa. And it has continued to stand by Moscow. Shortly before Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, India went ahead with purchases of Russian S-400 air defense systems, despite the threat of U.S. sanctions. Since the invasion, India has abstained on every decisive UN vote. It has refused to entertain any economic restrictions against Russia. It even began purchasing more Russian energy after the invasion began.

India's behavior regarding the war in Ukraine, in particular, has angered many of New Delhi's biggest supporters in the U.S. Congress. "Frankly, many of my colleagues and I are puzzled by India's equivocation in the face of the biggest threat to democracy since World War II," said Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, who chairs the Senate subcommittee responsible for South Asia. "At a time when democracies are closing ranks to condemn Russia's invasion, it is troubling, to say the least, to see India, the world's largest democracy, sitting on the sidelines."

AUTOCRACY PROMOTION

New Delhi's position on Ukraine certainly cuts against its espoused values. But it is far from India's biggest democratic failure. Since winning two sweeping national victories, one in 2014 and another in 2019, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party has made India's own attachment to liberalism more and more dubious. The BJP has hollowed out institutions that can check the prime minister's behavior, including by politicizing India's civilian bureaucracy and turning its Parliament into a rubber stamp for the party's priorities. Modi also tolerates no criticism in the media, academia, or civil society. The government, for example, imposed an outright ban on a 2023 BBC documentary that detailed Modi's role in the state of Gujarat's deadly 2002 communal riots. The organizations that compile the three biggest rankings of democracy across the world—the V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Institute, Freedom House, and the Economist Intelligence Unit—have all downgraded India's score since Modi took office.

New Delhi's democratic failings extend beyond eliminating checks and balances. The BJP is deeply intertwined with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, an organization that aims to give India an exclusively Hindu identity (and to which Modi belongs). Created in 1925, the RSS was modeled on interwar European fascist groups and charged with promoting, in the words of one founder, "the military regeneration of

the Hindus." This goal was directly opposed by Mohandas Gandhi and Nehru, who championed freedom of religion, celebrated diversity, and defended minority rights. That is why a radicalized Hindu nationalist and RSS member assassinated Gandhi in 1948.

India's autocratic turn creates many problems for the United States. One is that it simply makes New Delhi less trustworthy. Democratically accountable leaders need to justify and defend foreign policies to their own citizens, which makes their decisions more transparent and predictable. Authoritarian decisions, by contrast, are far harder to predict. In addition, the more ethnonationalist New Delhi becomes, the less secure India will be. India is home to roughly 200 million Muslims—almost the size of Pakistan's entire population—and it has an extensive history of communal violence. By repressing its minorities, India risks its tenuous stability in the near term and mounting and debilitating violence in the long term. And an India consumed with internal security challenges will have fewer resources, less bandwidth for foreign policy, and less legitimacy to play a constructive role beyond its borders.

India's Hindu nationalism at home also leads it to promote illiberal aims abroad. Hindu nationalists believe that one of their top foreign policy achievements has been mobilizing overseas RSS-affiliated groups in the Indian diaspora to lobby other capitals, including Washington, to support BJP initiatives. Hindu nationalists also believe that India should be a sprawling, civilizational power, and many of them say they want to create Akhand Bharat—a greater "Undivided India"—in which New Delhi would build a "cultural confederation" of territory stretching from Afghanistan to Myanmar and Sri Lanka to Tibet. In 2022, for example, the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat claimed that this could be a reality in as little as ten to 15 years. His statements raised questions about what a Hindu cultural confederation would actually mean, and they have prompted at least some regional consternation about whether India's drive for leadership will be as peaceful as the country claims.

Despite the obvious evidence of the BJP's illiberalism, top Biden administration officials have avoided publicly criticizing the Modi government. Instead, they have brushed aside concerns by declaring, as Blinken did in 2021, that every democracy is an imperfect "work in progress." Presumably, that is because Biden believes that expressing any concerns about Indian policies would cause too much harm to the relationship.

This fear is not baseless. Like most countries, India does not like to be criticized, so an honest airing of grievances would not go down well.

But the current, disingenuous approach has its own price. Soft-pedaling concerns about India's authoritarian slide, for example, weakens Washington's ability to champion democracy around the world. In fact, it might actively encourage democratic backsliding. India is no garden-variety struggling democracy: it is the world's most populous country and a leader in the global South. When Modi uses his association with Washington to burnish his democratic credentials and even to strengthen his self-serving narrative that Hindu India is "the mother of democracy" (as he declared during Washington's 2023 Summit for Democracy), it sets back liberalism everywhere.

Praising India's democracy also makes it hard for Biden to build the domestic political alliances he needs to cooperate with New Delhi on security. Many powerful U.S. constituencies, including evangelical Christian groups, are deeply concerned about India's poor treatment of minorities, its crackdown on religious freedoms, and its stifling of the press. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, along with other top U.S. media outlets, run stories and columns on these issues so frequently that BJP leaders have gone out of their way to label the publications "anti-Indian." And influential figures in Washington are expressing growing alarm about India's illiberal policies. In March 2021, for example, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, asking that he use his upcoming India trip to "make clear that in all areas, including security cooperation, the U.S.-India partnership must rest on adherence to democratic values." If Biden continues to emphasize principles in his pitch for better relations, his calls could face mounting opposition.

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

India's turn away from democracy is deeply unfortunate. But New Delhi is still an invaluable partner for Washington. In addition to being the world's most populous state, India boasts the world's fifth-largest economy, the world's second-largest military, and a significant cadre of highly educated scientists and engineers. It has a large arsenal of nuclear weapons. And like the United States, India is deeply concerned about China, which it sees as a dangerous power intent on challenging the regional and global order. In a way, now may be the best moment for the United States to cooperate with India. The question is how far Washington should go.

In many cases, the decision to help India is easy. When China began encroaching on Indian territory along the Chinese-Indian

border, prompting deadly clashes between the two countries' militaries in 2020, Washington rightfully provided New Delhi with urgently needed cold-weather gear and intelligence on Chinese positions. It also expedited already planned deliveries of surveillance drones. Since then, U.S. officials have correctly concluded that they can have far more candid discussions with India's leaders than they have had in the past about defense cooperation, both on land and at sea. They hope that the threat from China, combined with Russia's disastrous invasion of Ukraine, presents Washington with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to decisively (if not immediately) get New Delhi to shift its heavy reliance on Russian-made military gear to U.S. systems.

Greater U.S.-Indian alignment on China also means the two states could cooperate on certain kinds of technology. Washington, for example, could work with New Delhi to develop alternatives to Chinese-built information and telecommunications infrastructure as a means to compete in a global industry that Beijing has threatened to dominate. The United States could also speed up its efforts to diversify essential industrial inputs away from China and toward India. New Delhi, in turn, would benefit from new economic investments.

But Washington must be careful about the ways it deals with New Delhi. It must remain keenly aware that India's desire to work with the United States is born of circumstance, not conviction, and could quickly disappear. New Delhi, after all, spent most of the post–Cold War years vacillating about what role it should play between Beijing and Washington, and it often signed on to the former's initiatives. Even after the border clashes, China and India have roughly the same volume of trade as India and the United States have. New Delhi is still part of the Beijing-founded Shanghai Cooperation Organization. And many Indian policymakers and analysts would much prefer a multipolar world in which India is free to navigate flexible relationships with other great powers to a world led by the United States or defined by a new cold war between Beijing and Washington—a world in which New Delhi must take sides. One of New Delhi's greatest fears is being indefinitely consigned to the geopolitical sidelines.

For U.S. officials, then, cooperation with India must be tightly targeted to countering immediate threats posed by China. It is fine, for example, for the United States to conduct joint military exercises with India near the Chinese border, as the two states did in November 2022. It is also fine for Washington to strike transactional deals that obvi-

ously advance U.S. interests, such as a deal that gives the United States access to Indian seaports in exchange for finite technology transfers or additional intelligence. But when U.S. policies do not clearly enhance U.S.-Indian cooperation with respect to China, they should not receive the benefit of the doubt. The United States should think twice, for example, before approving a proposal General Electric put forward earlier this year to co-produce and transfer U.S. technology to India for advanced fighter jet engines. Washington may benefit from a better Indian military in the short term, but the GE deal could strengthen India's indigenous defense industry for decades, which might not serve U.S. interests in the long term.

U.S. officials must understand that, deep down, India is not an ally.

U.S. officials must understand that, deep down, India is not an ally. Its relationship to the United States is fundamentally unlike that of, say, a NATO member. And India will never aspire to that sort of alliance. For this reason, U.S. officials should not frame their agreements with India as the building blocks of a deeper relationship. The country is not a candidate for initiatives such as the AUKUS deal among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (which will help Australia develop nuclear submarine technologies) because such deals entail sharing important security vulnerabilities that only sturdy liberal democracies—ones with broadly shared values and aspirations—can safely exchange. India's uncertain commitment to democratic principles is also why Washington will never be able to share intelligence with New Delhi in the way that it does with its so-called Five Eyes partners: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

In fact, Washington should qualify its support for greater Indian participation in the international organizations to which New Delhi already belongs. India's voice is essential on the world stage, especially because of its vast and diverse society. But considering how often India and the United States diverge on important issues, it is not a bad thing that no one has taken up Obama's proposal to offer India a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Washington should similarly temper its expectations for the Quad—the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, among Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. The White House clearly hopes that the Quad can be an Indo-Pacific league of liberal democracies. But given India's identity, it simply cannot. What the Quad can do is better deter Chinese aggression in the region, and it should dedicate itself to that task.

TRUTH BE TOLD

As the Biden administration pivots away from seeking an imaginary relationship based on values to acknowledging a real one based on mutual interests, it must be forthright. The administration ought to explain to Indian and U.S. audiences alike that shared concerns about China and a wide array of other common interests create strong and constructive incentives for cooperation; there is much that the two sides can do together. But Washington needs to cease endorsing Modi's BJP. It must stop altruistically subsidizing the rise of another illiberal Asian giant. And the Indian government should know that its domestic political decisions have the potential to complicate and endanger relations with Washington. Indian voters should know that, too.

The Biden administration should also write and publish more reports that accurately depict India's record on human rights, freedoms, and democratic practices. Such analysis should then become required reading for U.S. leaders, including Pentagon policymakers and uniformed officers, who need to understand how undemocratic the world's largest democracy is. These reports must be scrupulously accurate, because they will certainly draw fire from Indian diplomats. But Biden should not worry that U.S. criticism will derail cooperation. Unlike Chinese military activities, a critical report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom does not materially threaten New Delhi. If India and the United States are going to be strong partners, both sides need to learn how to navigate serious disagreements without sweeping them under the rug, even if that means suffering some unpleasantness along the way. U.S. officials can unapologetically explain the American perspective without being undiplomatic, just as their Indian counterparts frequently do.

Many U.S. opponents of the Modi government would go even further, arguing that criticism of India's democratic shortcomings should be bolstered by active U.S. government initiatives—such as giving material support to Indian rights groups. Some critics have even encouraged Washington to withhold U.S. security cooperation unless India rolls back recent autocratic measures. But New Delhi is likely to balk at conditional defense ties, and pro-democracy investments will not be effective. India is almost unimaginably enormous and complicated, making it nearly impervious to outside political influence. As a postcolonial state, it is quite practiced at resisting, ignoring, or mitigating external interference. Better, then, to leave the task of strengthening India's democracy to the Indians themselves.

For now, that means the United States will have to deal with an unsavory government in New Delhi. But for Washington, this is nothing new. The United States has spent years cooperating with regimes it dislikes in order to bolster its security. At one point, it even worked with the country New Delhi and Washington are now trying to outcompete. The Nixon administration's 1972 opening to China was intended to exploit the differences between Beijing and Moscow to deliver a decisive advantage to the United States in the Cold War. It succeeded: President Richard Nixon's gambit deepened splits in the global communist movement, helped tie down Soviet army divisions along the border with China, and provided Washington with additional leverage over Moscow.

What followed, however, is much more controversial. Nixon's opening eventually led to a deluge of U.S. investment in China's economy and cooperation across many sectors—including, at times, defense and security. The United States' contributions helped China quickly become the world's second-largest economy. Washington instead should have had a greater appreciation for the ways in which U.S. and Chinese interests would most likely diverge as China's power grew. American policymakers could have then lowered their expectations, narrowed the scope of official cooperation, and even ruled out certain types of commerce. In hindsight, it is clear they could have partnered with Beijing to contain Moscow without contributing so much to the rise of a peer competitor.

India, of course, is not China, and it may never pose the same sort of challenge. And New Delhi's authoritarian turn has not been total. Despite the government's best efforts, India still has free (if not fair) elections and a vocal domestic opposition. Americans and Indians can, and should, hold out hope that India's diverse society will remake India into a liberal democracy more fundamentally aligned with the ideals that Washington seeks to uphold.

That, however, is not where India is today. The country is instead led by an ethnonationalist who tolerates little dissent. It is in thrall to an illiberal and increasingly undemocratic party, and that party's grip on politics is only becoming firmer. Unless that changes, the United States will not be able to treat India as it treats Japan, South Korea, and NATO allies in Europe. It must instead treat India as it treats Jordan, Vietnam, and any number of other illiberal partners. It must, in other words, cooperate with India on the reality of shared interests, not on the hope of shared values.

Steering global progress

The world faces a myriad of challenges that requires decisive and immediate action. While governments lead global efforts, some business schools form new models to address the world's most pressing issues.

Renowned for its innovative curriculum, the Geneva Business School has shone the light on corporate diplomacy. This focus empowers students to negotiate the intricacies of global business and understand how corporations can navigate political and cultural barriers. In today's world, such skills are no longer a luxury but a necessity.

"We are looking at the world from the top of a pyramid, trying to understand where we are going. Therefore, geopolitics and international relations within our program is key. Today, we need to acknowledge the role of private institutions and organizations in different parts of the world and how they can be active advocates and actors to try and help solve conflicts," said **Geneva Business School Spain CEO Nicola Jackan**.

Within the context of the European Union, ESCP Business School embraces multiculturalism and adopts a humanistic vision wherein economic, political, cultural and social dimensions are deeply intertwined.

"At the core of ESCP is a European vision of the economy that belongs to multiple ecosystems," said **ESCP Business School Executive Director for Brand & Communications Dimitri Champollion**.

On its 51st year, ESCP equips its students with the tools to bridge such divides and trains future business leaders who can shape a more inclusive, equitable global economy.

Across the Atlantic, the Ecole des sciences de Gestion at the University of Quebec in Montreal (ESG-UQAM) wants to have a global impact through, among others, its Executive MBA programs. By making those programs accessible from anywhere in the world, it hopes to shape effective business and government leaders in Canada and abroad.

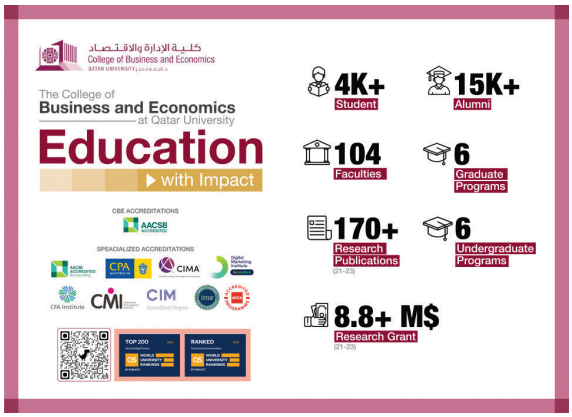
"We are very proud of our contributions in uplifting the level of education not only in Canada but also in developing countries. Some of our graduates have become impactful CEOs, diplomats and public servants. It is in our DNA to shape leaders," said **ESG-UQAM Dean Komlan Sedzro**.

In Sweden, Linköping University's Division of Business Administration encourages students to apply rigorous scientific methods to solve business problems, an approach critical in an era of fast technological change and big data.

"We take pride in the space we give our students and employees to pursue research and innovation by combining multiple fields, to explore the impact job satisfaction on mental health in the workplace, for instance. Inter-disciplinary convergence is in our DNA", said **Linköping University Division Business Administration Head Pernilla Broberg**.

Finally, in the Middle East, Qatar University's College of Business & Economics has designed a curriculum around the concept of 'Conscious Capitalism.'

"Businesses play a vital role in not only generating economic and financial value but also in creating significant environmental and societal value. It is imperative that we embrace business models that no longer necessitate tradeoffs between profitability and the desire to make a positive impact on society and the environment. By seeking synergies, businesses can effectively achieve both goals simultaneously," said **Qatar University's College of Business & Economics Dean Rana Sobh**. ■



Nurturing ethical leadership and global diplomacy

The world is as interconnected and complex as ever. With that comes a minefield that executives need to navigate in order to achieve success. **Geneva Business School**, a private institution with a unique Swiss DNA, stands out as a champion of ethical leadership and global diplomacy.

"Fragility is the most challenging status to maintain globally. Achieving and maintaining global harmony amid conflicts and shifting geopolitical dynamics is an uphill battle", said **Nicola Jackman, Geneva Business School's Spain CEO and Barcelona Campus Director**.

The institution places a strong emphasis on cultivating responsible leaders who can navigate the complexities of the real world. With a student body representing over 100 nationalities, Geneva Business School fosters an inclusive environment that promotes appreciation for cultural diversity and essential dialogue and negotiation skills across its campuses in Geneva, Barcelona and Madrid.

Its curriculum addresses pressing issues such as sustainability and corporate diplomacy. It has courses that cover conflict resolution, international law, and human rights. Moreover, the school prioritizes the development of soft skills, which ensures its graduates possess effective communication, body language interpretation, and empathy – a critical attribute in an era marked by technological advancement and automation.

Recognizing the increasing importance of geopolitics and international relations, the institution provides students with insights into the interplay between states, businesses, and international institutions. A good example of the latter would be the exclusive partnership with WFUNA (Advanced Training Program at the United Nations). By understanding the decision-making processes at the state level, students are prepared to make informed choices that anticipate future challenges.

Corporate diplomacy serves as a cornerstone of Geneva Business School's approach, fostering understanding and collaboration among governments, entrepreneurs, and businesses. Through role-playing exercises and case studies, students develop negotiation skills, effective communication, responsible and ethical decision-making abilities.

International engagement is highly valued at Geneva Business School as seen in its partnerships with renowned universities worldwide. These partnerships provide students with immersive experiences in different cultures and perspectives, enabling them to gain a holistic understanding of global affairs and navigate the complexities of an interconnected world.

Looking ahead, Geneva Business School remains committed to delivering excellence in education. The institution aims to strengthen its focus on quality, address global leadership needs, and establish new academic partnerships. By championing inclusive education and fostering critical thinking and independence in students, the school prepares them to become responsible leaders capable of driving positive change. ■

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Can India Become a Green Superpower?

The Stakes of the World's Most Important Energy Transition

ARUNABHA GHOSH

When climate negotiations opened in October 2021 at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow, the environmental outlook was gloomy. Carbon emissions around the world were rapidly rising. Seemingly every part of the planet was routinely being hit with extreme weather, some of which resulted in thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in damage. But the world's biggest polluters were doing little to tame their emissions. The planet was on track to warm by well over two degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. It is a threshold that, if crossed, could prompt extraordinary droughts, cause the seas to inundate major coastal cities, and lead to the extinction of multiple species.

ARUNABHA GHOSH is CEO of the Council on Energy, Environment and Water and Vice Chair of the UN Committee for Development Policy. He served as a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities.

But on the first day of the conference, India made a dramatic announcement: it planned to reach net-zero emissions by 2070. India is the world's largest country by population and its third-biggest polluter. If India meets that goal, the planet will have a fighting chance to stay within the two-degree target. One estimate found that India's net-zero achievement could reduce warming by 0.2 degrees Celsius, a remarkable figure for the efforts of just one state. That change could be the difference. Some studies show that if every country follows through on its pledge, the global temperature increase might be kept to 1.8 degrees Celsius.

Although India's net-zero goal is worth celebrating, it will be extremely difficult to meet. India is trying to develop as fast as it can while eliminating greenhouse gas emissions, and traditionally, states cannot develop and decarbonize simultaneously. Every state that has gone from poor to rich has done so by dramatically increasing its energy consumption, and India is unlikely to be an exception. The country's electric system, already the world's third largest, is expected to grow rapidly in the years to come. Indeed, depending on the trajectory India chooses, its total energy demand could more than double between now and 2050. If it wants to fight climate change, New Delhi will have to find a way to make this leap without spewing more carbon into the atmosphere. It will, in other words, have to grow in a manner that no major economy has before.

Thankfully, there are signs that India is up to the task. New Delhi has vigorously promoted clean energy over the past decade, regularly ratcheting up its targets and rolling out green initiatives. Its endeavors are paying off. According to analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, a Delhi-based independent research institution, India's efforts to promote solar energy and electric transportation should result in a cumulative emission reduction of more than 1.25 billion tons of carbon dioxide between 2015 and 2030. India has also cut down on appliance emissions, and it is pioneering international clean energy projects.

There is still much more New Delhi needs to do, especially in India's industrial sectors. And the country will have to better integrate itself into the international energy market if it wants to really embrace green power. But if New Delhi can succeed, India will not only reduce its own carbon emissions. It will also become a global energy player in its own right—and one that carves out a low-carbon, sustainable pathway for high levels of economic development that the rest of the global South can follow.

SNOWBALL'S CHANCE?

Access to energy is a basic human right. It is virtually impossible to stay healthy without electric pumps that can run or produce clean water, and it is difficult to have a functional household without electric appliances or working light bulbs. Any hospital or doctor's office needs power to treat patients, and schools need energy to teach students. There are very few workers in any industry—even those who labor with their hands—who cannot benefit from energy in some way, if only to get to or from their place of employment. There is a reason why no society has reached a high human development index without a significant increase in energy consumption.

Right now, India is a long way from the kinds of energy usage that are typical in rich countries. The average Indian consumes one-third of the electricity that the average human does and one-twelfth of what the average American churns through. New Delhi is working hard to change these discrepancies, including by rolling out more power lines to businesses and houses that still lack electricity. Such endeavors are good—and necessary. But the government's push for parity in making electricity accessible will create multiple environmental problems, none of which are easy to solve.

Consider, for example, air cooling. Some Americans and Europeans can get by without good fans or air conditioning, but almost every part of India endures scorching temperatures for sustained periods. As a result, for India, cooling is an imperative for public health and development. In fact, the country's demand for cooling is expected to rise eightfold between 2018 and 2038—one of the fastest rates among major economies—as India's population grows and as temperatures rise. But most air conditioning systems require large quantities of power to function, and more cooling will mean more emissions if India's energy system is dominated by fossil fuels.

And right now, India's energy system is, indeed, carbon dependent. Coal accounts for a whopping 57 percent of the country's primary energy consumption; oil accounts for 27 percent, and natural gas accounts for over six percent. Nonfossil fuel sources—such as solar, hydropower, and nuclear energy—make up just ten percent. To achieve net zero, India must therefore dramatically reconfigure its energy sources. In the future, much of the country's economy will have to be powered by clean electricity. Other parts will have to be powered by clean fuel. For instance, under certain scenarios, India's industrial and trucking

sectors will need to get at least 80 percent of their energy from green electricity by 2070, and the remainder will have to come from other clean energy sources, such as green hydrogen or sustainable biofuels.

Hitting this figure will require extraordinary feats of development to upgrade the country's infrastructure. As part of the net-zero transition, for example, India wants to deploy 500,000 megawatts worth of clean electricity infrastructure by 2030. (A megawatt of solar energy can power 350 to 400 homes a year.) Right now, its renewable energy capacity is 125,692 megawatts. Reaching the 2030 goal will therefore be a monumental task, requiring India to build an average of 11 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity for ten hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, during every year for the remainder of the decade.

> To fight climate change, India will have to grow in a manner that no major economy has before.

But it is doable. In 2010, for example, the country had less than 20 megawatts of solar power capacity. India's big push for clean energy since then has resulted in the development of 67,078 megawatts of capacity. India's wind energy journey has been similarly impressive. In 2008, when India's National Action Plan on Climate Change was announced, the country had 9,400 megawatts of wind capacity. Now, it has more than 42,500 megawatts. Hydropower and nuclear energy make up 46,850 megawatts and 6,780 megawatts, respectively, of India's power capacity. Collectively, nonfossil sources already account for 43 percent of India's electricity system.

Of course, clean power capacity is not the same as clean power generation. Renewable energy is intermittent, fluctuating wildly throughout the day and during different seasons. To increase the share of renewable energy that Indians can actually use, the country will need to make its power grid more resilient and invest heavily in battery storage. India's power grid is already more integrated than that of the United States, but it needs to be ready to transport much larger shares of clean energy whenever and wherever such energy can be produced. New Delhi is aware of this challenge, and it is creating green energy corridors to make it easier to transmit clean power out of eight renewable-rich Indian states and across the country. The project is already showing results: by November 2022, India had built 5,400 miles of transmission lines and charged 19,858 substations. Yet the country will need to pick up the pace if renewables are going to become central to the Indian power system.

The scale of investment that India will need to overcome these infrastructure challenges is staggering. By some estimates, the Indian economy must spend roughly $10 trillion (in 2020 prices) on green energy infrastructure between now and 2070, or $214 billion each year, to meet its target. That figure is a far cry from the $13 billion to $14 billion that the economy is spending on renewable energy each year right now. India's annual investments in renewable energy—although significantly outpacing its investment in coal—are not accelerating fast enough to make up the difference. In fact, India's renewable energy industry is growing at a slower rate than it was just a few years ago. The industry increased in size by 25 percent from 2017 to 2018, but it grew by just over 16 percent from 2021 to 2022.

India faces other, nonmonetary obstacles in its efforts at clean development. The country wants to make sure its energy system is not only green but also insulated from international pressure or shocks, and right now, just one state—China, including Hong Kong—accounts for 92 percent of India's renewable energy equipment, lithium ion, and rare earth elements. This level of concentration could stymie the pace of renewables deployment. Under certain net-zero scenarios, India needs more than 5.6 million megawatts of solar capacity and nearly 1.8 million megawatts of wind capacity by 2070—more than 84 times its current solar capacity and 42 times its current wind capacity. It is highly unlikely, however, that India will choose to build the number of solar panels and wind turbines needed to produce this much energy if doing so entails being highly dependent on one, or even a handful, of international suppliers.

New Delhi does have some of the goods needed to create its own renewable energy manufacturing system. The government, for instance, discovered 5.9 million tons of lithium in Jammu and Kashmir at the beginning of this year, which could help reduce India's reliance on other countries for a mineral critical to clean batteries. But this find, by itself, will not give India a battery industry. Building the capacity to extract lithium could take up to 20 years, and creating factories that place it inside batteries could take four years. For India to beat this timeline, it will need to get other countries to share the technology needed to efficiently and sustainably extract and then make use of its resources.

GROWING BY GREENING

India's drive toward net zero will not be easy. Still, the country can make big strides in short order. India, for example, is growing its

Emission critical: near a power plant in Dadri, India, April 2022

RAKASH SINGH / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

economy while reducing the emission intensity of GDP—the amount of emissions generated per dollar added to its national income—which fell by 31.5 percent between 2005 and 2020. Encouraged by this success, India has now committed to reducing its emission intensity by 45 percent by 2030.

New Delhi has achieved this reduction by having energy efficiency and green energy actively power its economic development. The country has electrified multiple households in ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of its *Saubhagya* (or "good fortune") scheme, which connected 28 million homes to electricity in 18 months and brought household electrification rates to at least 98 percent. It did this while injecting more clean energy into the grid, keeping the increase in emissions that accompanies rising electrification rates to a minimum. Another priority has been getting Indians to cook using cleaner energy. In the past, most Indian households cooked by burning wood or other plant materials, which emit large quantities of carbon dioxide. Indians do not generally cook using electricity, but India's 2016 *Ujjwala* (or "bright") scheme addressed this problem by bringing much cleaner and more effective liquefied petroleum gas cylinders to more than 85 percent of households—up from just 50 percent of households a few years before.

New Delhi is also leveraging India's growing digitalization—one of the hallmarks of the government's development efforts—to help cut back on carbon emissions. Over the last decade, as hundreds of millions of Indians have purchased phones and data plans, New Delhi has launched initiatives that provide citizens with online access to government services. Some of these initiatives have focused on efficiently delivering green energy subsidies to consumers who need them. For instance, since 2017, one digital program has provided Indians with $12.2 billion worth of clean-cooking subsidies.

India's digital revolution is also making it easier for the country to deploy smart meters, which measure how much power a building is consuming and communicate readings back to the grid in real time. This, in turn, allows utilities to efficiently deliver electricity by calibrating exactly when and where to target the flow of energy, cutting back on waste. Smart meters can also support the use of green appliances, such as superefficient ceiling fans, which should be optimized for power consumption.

And when it comes to installing green appliances, India has already proved itself to be a global leader. The country, for example, has become the world's largest procurer of LED light bulbs. Billed as the largest such program in the world, the government's large-scale purchases of LED light bulbs reduced the cost of a single light bulb in India by 85 percent between 2015 and 2019, making energy-efficient light bulbs affordable for ordinary households. By April 2023, India had deployed 368 million LED bulbs, abating 38.7 million tons of carbon each year. The deployment of other, more expensive green appliances will be even easier once additional smart meters are in place.

India's efforts to encourage the use of green power extend beyond initiatives targeted at households or other buildings. Last year, India ordered 5,450 electric buses, one of the world's largest tenders, to help ensure that its urban residents—60 percent of whom currently walk as a primary means of transportation—use clean energy as they start turning to vehicles. (The government has become more ambitious and is aiming to order 50,000 such buses.) India's vast railway network aims to be net zero by 2030, abating 60 million tons of carbon annually. In its effort to move away from relying on China for its green energy needs, India is now subsidizing domestic solar-module manufacturing.

Although India's manufacturing initiatives are impressive, they pale in comparison to those created by the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act or the European Union's Fit-for-55 plan. And dollar for dollar, India

is unlikely to match them anytime soon; the country simply lacks the fiscal resources of Washington and Brussels. To diversify the sources of its green energy products and to make sure it gets enough of them, India should therefore become part of a renewable energy manufacturing supply chain that extends from the United States to the European Union and from Australia to Japan. It could do so by setting up factories that produce clean energy goods, such as solar cells, battery cathodes, and wind turbine components. These can be made by international energy companies—either independently or in joint ventures with Indian ones.

Coal accounts for a whopping 57 percent of India's primary energy consumption.

These manufacturing and procurement policies, however, will not help India decarbonize its heavy industries, which are some of the country's most significant sources of pollution. The steel, cement, fertilizer, and petrochemical industries alone account for one-fifth of India's total greenhouse gas emissions and three-quarters of the country's industrial emissions. New Delhi has been focused on making these and other heavy industries more efficient. It has done so, in part, by launching a program in which different manufacturers trade energy-efficiency certificates; industrial firms that cannot meet legally set energy-efficiency standards buy certificates from those that have surpassed their efficiency targets. But energy efficiency is not the same as emission abatement. The Indian cement sector, for instance, has the most energy-efficient cement plants and factories in the world, and it still produced 76.9 million tons of carbon dioxide in 2019. That figure will only grow as India urbanizes and the size of the cement industry expands. To develop in a green fashion, India needs ways to decarbonize these industries without putting them out of business.

The country can start by convincing its industries to use clean electricity as their main energy source. Right now, industries get less than 20 percent of their energy from electricity, dirty or clean. Heavy industries, of course, cannot use electricity for everything; they need fuels for high-intensity heat. So to make sure that these fuels are clean, too, India is pushing its industries to adopt green hydrogen. The country's "Green Hydrogen Mission," approved by the government in January, aims to produce five million tons of the product per year by 2030. The 13 task forces New Delhi has created to clean up the Indian steel industry, which is the world's second largest, are also promoting

green hydrogen. To be effective, the country's industries will need to get on board with using the product themselves: demand is just as important as supply in bending the emission curve. But if steel or petrochemical manufacturers begin using green hydrogen, India could become one of the world's lowest-cost green hydrogen producers.

And India may be able to create such demand through its Energy Conservation Act, which the country's Parliament amended in late 2022 to push for decarbonization. One of the act's updated provisions promises that the government will create a carbon-credit trading system, which would place legal restrictions on how much companies can pollute and impose a price on carbon. India's Bureau of Energy Efficiency has already started conducting consultations with accredited energy auditors and carbon verifiers to design India's carbon market. Once the system is in place, it will send a long-term signal to major polluters that they need to use green energy—and increase demand for cleaner fuels, including green hydrogen for heavy industries.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

New Delhi has been proactive about protecting the environment. But the central government is far from India's only government player when it comes to climate change. India is home to a patchwork of states and public enterprises, each with its own energy policies and priorities. Together, they will be important—and perhaps pivotal—parts of India's green transition. Yet so far, their efforts have had mixed results.

On the plus side, several states are charting clear, low-carbon pathways. Jharkhand, for example, plans to deploy 4,000 megawatts of solar capacity by 2027, up from 117.9 megawatts in April 2023—even though it is home to 27 percent of India's coal reserves. Bihar, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, three of India's biggest states, are developing or updating net-zero pathways or updating climate action plans of their own. Tamil Nadu has also created a green climate company staffed by experts and tasked with carrying out many of the state's plans. Telangana is positioning itself as a global hub for electric vehicles and related manufacturing. As part of its efforts, it hosted the all-electric Formula E car race in February.

Yet net-zero commitments by India's states have not been backed up by legislative approval, which puts them at risk when governments change. And many states lack the fiscal resources needed to pivot away from carbon fuels. The accumulated losses of state-owned power dis-

tribution companies, which are now more than $65 billion, continue to mount, as do these companies' debts to banks and power generating businesses. The central government has repeatedly bailed out the distribution companies, but if the losses continue, state governments will eventually have to pick up the tab. This overhanging debt makes international institutional investors wary of putting money into India's clean energy infrastructure simply because they will not get adequate returns if Indian utilities don't pay up. Such wariness could cause international investors to either bypass India or invest only on terms that will be unaffordable for the country's clean energy firms. And India desperately needs more financing: right now, India attracts only 2.9 percent of global clean energy investment.

This remarkably low number is not just bad for India. It is also negligent on the part of investors, who ought to be swarming around India's energy sector irrespective of their concerns about state finances. In this decade alone, investment opportunities in renewable energy, electric mobility, and green hydrogen in India will be more than $500 billion, according to various government and independent estimates. India also has a potential $50 billion market for entities that can offer job-creating, clean energy services in rural parts of the country. Emerging markets that import energy, such as India, will drive half of all the expected growth in new demand for electricity until 2040. It is a fact that makes India a major market for any energy firm that is looking to expand. New Delhi, aware of this potential, has started issuing sovereign green bonds to attract capital.

Given India's size, it isn't just investors who should pay attention to the country's power sector. Policymakers everywhere will need to make sure that the world's energy security architecture responds to India's needs—and then meets them with the fuels of the future. To that end, governments around the world should have more dialogue with India about energy security concerns. They also need to have more energy-related conversations with developing countries in general. To create a truly clean global economy, all states must figure out how to best expand and diversify green energy commerce and foster competition.

India is attempting to create such a dialogue through its ongoing G-20 presidency, in which it has made building resilient, renewable energy supply chains a priority. The country has also helped put together a variety of new clean energy initiatives. In 2015, for example, France

and India established the International Solar Alliance, which now has 115 signatory countries, to aggregate demand for solar energy (particularly in the tropics) and thereby offer a larger market for institutional investors and project developers. India also created the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which focuses on reducing climate-related disaster risks for power infrastructure, airports, and telecommunications gear. Such disaster proofing is of particular importance to New Delhi. Three-quarters of India's districts are already hot spots for extreme climate events, and the intensity and frequency of storm surges, cyclones, and floods are increasing. The country will need detailed, localized, and regular assessments of physical climate risks in order to protect its infrastructure.

International investors ought to be swarming around India's energy sector.

There is more on India's international climate agenda. Along with Sweden, India is chairing the Leadership Group for Industry Transition, a consortium of 18 major economies and several corporations that focuses on decarbonizing heavy industries by 2050. The Green Grids Initiative–One Sun One World One Grid, created in November 2021 with the United Kingdom, aims to connect power grids across the world via high-voltage transmission lines to make sure countries can get clean power from wherever the sun might be shining or the wind might be blowing. Through this project, India hopes to connect its own power grid with those of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. To the west, India plans to hook up to the Middle East and eventually to Africa. Doing so will help all these places—together, most of the developing world—both decarbonize and develop.

But New Delhi can accomplish even more. Given the importance of green hydrogen, India should work with the United States to create rules and joint projects for the global green hydrogen economy. The U.S. Inflation Reduction Act promises three dollars of subsidies per kilogram of green hydrogen—effectively undercutting low-cost producers in other countries—and has made other countries, including India, jittery. There is a real risk that, without coordination, green hydrogen protectionist policies and islands of regulation will emerge around the world, creating barriers that make production difficult to scale. Instead, regulators, standards bodies, and industries should come together to create a universally acceptable definition of what counts as green hydro-

gen and what constitutes its derivatives. States and companies need to harmonize and co-develop green hydrogen standards, safety protocols, and certification systems. Countries could even pool their resources to make the next generation of electrolyzer and membrane technologies for green hydrogen production. The Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) among Australia, India, Japan, and the United States has a clean hydrogen partnership that could serve as the basis for more broad-based cooperation. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the White House on June 22, he and U.S. President Joe Biden could announce a Global Green Hydrogen Alliance—and invite other countries to join, help set the rules, promote interdependence, and make the green hydrogen market more fair, transparent, and competitive.

LINK UP

India has set out to do the near impossible: simultaneously provide energy access to hundreds of millions of people, clean up one of the world's largest energy systems, and become a green industrial powerhouse. To complete all three tasks, it has created a variety of spending programs and other initiatives to grow the economy by decarbonizing it, to subsidize domestic solar and wind manufacturing, and to push India's industries away from fossil fuels. But the country will have to spend and build more—in some cases, much more—if it wants to pull off this transformation.

The rest of the world has an interest in making sure that India succeeds, and countries should invest in India accordingly. But India also needs to engage more with the world. Political leaders like to call for energy independence. Yet for more than a century, no major economy has become completely energy independent; all countries rely on outside states to help fill their energy needs. And India, especially, must be careful not to fall into the trap of green protectionism. It will not win a war of manufacturing subsidies with China, the United States, or the European Union, and it has much to lose from a green energy trade conflict.

Instead, India needs to develop partnerships with other states and international companies. It must make itself into an indispensable and reliable node in the global marketplace for clean energy products and services. It must become a hub for the development, deployment, and export of clean technologies. It must, in other words, become a green power player—one that helps design the energy security architecture that can bring power to people and guarantee a sustainable future.

The Real Origins of the Border Crisis

How a Broken Asylum System Warped American Immigration

JULIA PRESTON

In April 2023, New York Mayor Eric Adams gave an unusually testy press conference about the Biden administration's border policies. Over the previous year, more than 57,000 asylum seekers had come through New York's already overstretched shelter system, and they were still arriving at a rate of about 200 people a day. The city had taken over 103 hotels as emergency shelters. More than 14,000 migrant children had been enrolled in public schools. Calling it "one of the largest humanitarian crises that this city has ever experienced," Adams said that the cost of assisting the new arrivals had soared to $4.3 billion over two years, forcing him to make across-the-board budget cuts in other city services. "The president and the White House have failed New York City on this issue," the mayor said, taking direct aim at U.S. President Joe Biden even though, as

JULIA PRESTON is a contributing writer at the Marshall Project. She was the national immigration correspondent for *The New York Times* from 2006 to 2016 and received a Pulitzer Prize in 1998 for her reporting on Mexico.

Illustration by Zoë van Dijk

the Democratic mayor of the largest city in the country, Adams was supposed to be one of his staunchest allies.

Since late spring, there has been an intense debate about the Biden administration's decision to end a Trump-era border enforcement policy known as Title 42. Under the authority of a COVID-19 public health emergency, the three-year-old order had allowed immediate expulsions of unlawful border crossers, and when the administration ended it, on May 11, many commentators predicted a huge migrant surge. But as Adams's combative intervention signaled weeks earlier, the southwest border had reached a crisis point long before Biden's latest policy shift. In fiscal 2022—when the Title 42 order was in effect—U.S. Border Patrol agents made 2.2 million stops of migrants trying to cross the border, an all-time record. Probably even more significant is another all-time high: between March 2021 and November 2022 more than 1.1 million migrants were released by U.S. border authorities into the United States, most of them with temporary permissions to stay and notices to appear in immigration courts on dates far in the future.

This record wave has had new and far-reaching impacts. In April 2022, Greg Abbott, the Republican governor of Texas, started sending thousands of migrants on buses to New York and other cities in blue states, in a political gambit to force Democratic leaders to confront the large numbers. By September, the surge in asylum seekers had moved Adams and other officials such as Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser and Illinois Governor Jay Pritzker to declare a state of emergency. Meanwhile, a humanitarian disaster was unfolding on the Mexican side of the border. This spring in the cities of Matamoros and Reynosa, across from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, more than 20,000 migrants, anxiously awaiting a chance to cross, were sleeping on the ground in squalid tent camps with open sewers, where many of them were preyed upon by Mexican drug cartel enforcers with extortion and even sexual assault. The disarray led to horror in Ciudad Juárez on March 27, when a fire in a Mexican migrant detention facility killed 40 people who were trapped inside, as security guards walked away.

In part, the influx has been fueled by extraordinary external pressures. Over the past few years, a toxic combination of political instability, criminal violence, and the punishing economic aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed the highest levels of migration

in the Western Hemisphere since World War II. The movements began a decade ago with families fleeing rapacious gangs and hopeless poverty in the northern countries of Central America. In more recent years, hundreds of thousands of migrants have also come to the U.S. border from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, countries where misrule and repression have driven people out and where the United States has few options for mitigating the underlying causes. Following newly forged migrant trails from South America, people from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru have also started to arrive in numbers not seen before.

Asylum is now the main channel for mass immigration across the southwest border.

But the scale of the migration does not alone explain the dysfunction at the border. At the core of the crisis, from the borderlands to the American interior, is the U.S. asylum system. It was created nearly half a century ago to assess foreigners' claims of persecution case by case. Over the past decade, however, the asylum system has become something else: for lack of other legal avenues, it has turned into the main channel for mass immigration across the southwest border, a function it was never designed to serve. By the end of 2022, almost 800,000 asylum cases were awaiting adjudication in the immigration courts, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a data research center; these were part of huge backlogs of all kinds of immigration cases now swamping the courts. The average asylum claim took more than four years to decide. Yet in fiscal 2022 the courts nationwide granted asylum in only 22,311 cases; a larger number of the cases decided last year, more than 26,000, were denied. Since there have been no clear-cut procedures for deporting asylum seekers whose claims are rejected, many of those people and their families—along with tens of thousands of asylum seekers denied in previous years—have quietly joined the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the country.

The asylum system is failing at every step of the way. It has failed to provide orderly pathways for migrants at the border. It does not provide timely protection for people escaping from truly threatening situations in their home countries; nor does it give timely denials to migrants who are fleeing poverty and cannot meet the exacting legal definition of persecution. And now, as New York, Chicago, and

other cities struggle with the rising costs of supporting the newcomers, they confront another failure: the system prevents asylum seekers from going to work to contribute to the U.S. economy. Most migrants are eager to support themselves and their families, and they are arriving at a time when American employers face critical labor shortages in many industries in which immigrants have historically thrived: farm and dairy work, food processing, landscaping, construction, nursing, home health care, childcare. But because of statutory restrictions and bureaucratic backlogs, asylum seekers must now wait a year or more to receive legal work permits.

In place of Title 42, in May the Biden administration launched an ambitious new strategy for managing the border. The goal is to short-circuit irregular migration by offering new lawful pathways to people before they reach the United States and imposing punitive consequences for those who fail to follow them. Under a new rule, migrants will not be eligible for asylum unless they either use a government mobile app to make an appointment to present themselves at an official land port of entry or can show that they have already been denied asylum in a third country they passed through on their way to the United States. Known as a transit ban, the latter measure is similar to one attempted by U.S. President Donald Trump, and in practice will shut down access to asylum across much of the southwest border. Most unauthorized crossers will be detained and swiftly deported to their home countries. In early May, Biden also ordered 1,500 additional active-duty troops to the border.

Despite these tough measures, Biden's approach has won little support. Republican lawmakers have accused the president of intentionally opening the border to gang lords, fentanyl traffickers, and Chinese spies and claim that the administration's strategy will only encourage more illegal migration. For their part, immigrant rights groups and Democrats in Washington have assailed the new measures as a breach of fundamental legal rights and American moral values. Almost completely lost in this debate, however, is the underlying broken asylum system. After years of stalemate in Washington on immigration reform, the asylum bureaucracy has become its own de facto immigration system. It no longer serves people escaping danger that it was designed to protect; nor does it bring any order to the challenges of securing the border and integrating newcomers into the U.S. economy.

WIDE OPENING, NARROW CHUTE

The origins of asylum date back to the Refugee Act of 1980. Signed into law by the Carter administration, the legislation was adopted in part to make amends for the country's shameful refusal to accept Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. Washington was focused at the time on bringing in hundreds of thousands of refugees from Vietnam who had fled the communist government after the U.S. defeat in the war. With those wartime political refugees in mind, the crafters of the law incorporated the legal definition of persecution from the 1951 Refugee Convention: protection can be granted to someone who has "a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

The law creates two distinct routes to protection: refugee status and asylum. Refugees are people uprooted from their countries who meet the legal definition of persecution and apply for protection when they are outside the United States. They are generally screened and registered as refugees by the United Nations and then rigorously vetted again by the State Department before they travel to the United States. The White House sets an annual goal for refugee admissions, and the federal government and humanitarian organizations support their resettlement. For decades, refugees enjoyed bipartisan support, until Trump slashed the annual quota to its lowest level on record, effectively gutting the program. For each of the last two years, Biden has lifted the quota to 125,000, the highest U.S. target since the 1990s, but bureaucratic hurdles have kept the actual number of resettled refugees far lower.

Asylum, on the other hand, is the route for people who are already in the United States—even if only by a few feet over the border. The convoluted bureaucracies that have grown up around asylum offer two ways to win protection. Foreign nationals who have already been living in the country and are afraid to go home can present their case to asylum officers from an agency in the Department of Homeland Security, who assess their stories in probing but not adversarial interviews. Migrants who reach U.S. soil by crossing a border without papers, however, have another process entirely, centered on the immigration courts. They are subject to fast-track deportation, but they can initiate an asylum claim to fight the removal. In this process, a DHS asylum officer makes a quick assessment of the migrant's story. If the officer finds that the expression of fear is not credible, the migrant can appeal to an immigration judge,

but most of those cases end in a denial and lead to deportation. If the officer finds the fear is credible—as happened in the vast majority of cases over the last decade—the case goes to immigration court. Government prosecutors can challenge the migrant's account, and a judge decides whether to grant asylum or issue a final deportation order, among other options. Such decisions can be appealed, in laborious proceedings, through two higher levels of judges.

The immense logjam of cases has mainly resulted from the funnel-like design of the system. To be consistent with international refugee law, Congress has written the statute to leave a very wide opening at the border for people coming in desperation. Migrants can ask for asylum at any point along the border, "whether or not at a designated port of arrival" and regardless of whether they have any legal entry documents. But from that point on, asylum seekers pass into a very small chute: they must show in court that they fit the strict parameters of the U.S. persecution standard in lengthy proceedings based on complicated, constantly evolving laws. Without a competent lawyer, the final narrow passage is almost impossible to navigate, and in immigration court there is no right to an attorney provided by the government.

The rigid asylum bureaucracy has failed to adapt to the huge shifts in the populations coming to the southern border. For decades, most unauthorized border crossers were Mexicans who were heading to fields and factories in the United States, often seasonally; as labor migrants, they rarely sought asylum. But after 2010, Mexican migration subsided, and families from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America began to arrive. They were not political or religious refugees. People from El Salvador and Honduras were running from vicious gangs that were waging turf wars, controlling swaths of territory, recruiting teenagers, and imposing their dominion with sexual violence and femicide. Guatemalans, including many indigenous Mayas, were fleeing extreme poverty and racist subjugation. Families crossed the Rio Grande in south Texas, but instead of trying to elude the Border Patrol, as the Mexicans had done, they sought out its agents to ask for protection. Advocates took up their cases in the courts, litigating to expand the definition of persecution to include victims of gang crimes, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. During this period, the backlog of asylum cases pending in U.S. courts rose nearly sixfold.

With many more migrants seeking asylum, smugglers in Mexico gained new sway at the border. Earlier, Mexican migrant workers had

Promised land: at the border near San Diego, California, May 2023

MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES

paid human smugglers to provide services: to guide them through remote terrain, to help evade the Border Patrol, and to arrange transportation to their destinations. With the arrival of families from Central America, however, narcotics cartels recognized the low-risk, high-profit potential of human smuggling, especially along the more than 1,200 miles of Texas border that runs down the middle of the Rio Grande. Rather than acting as facilitators, these traffickers became gatekeepers: they demanded $5,000 to $20,000 for unsafe passage across Mexico; then, at the border, they kidnapped the migrants and held them for additional ransom in filthy stash houses on the Mexican side. For crossings, the smugglers put the migrants on rafts or directed them to shallow fords in the river. After collecting their fees, the smugglers watched from the Mexican riverbank without ever having to risk arrest in the United States.

Now that migrants are using mobile phones and social media to guide their journeys, smugglers, always intent on increasing their profits, have become increasingly effective at controlling the information that migrants receive. Even as Biden administration officials broadcast warnings that the border is not open, smugglers send the message to migrants that the chances of making it into the United States are good. "Everything south of the border, everything, is controlled by

the cartels," John Modlin, the Border Patrol chief in Tucson, Arizona, told a congressional hearing in February. "No one crosses the border without going through the cartels."

REVOLVING DOOR

Successive administrations have tried different strategies to address the rising flows. Faced with the surge from Central America, U.S. President Barack Obama opted, starting in early 2014, for deterrence. He sped up deportations, stepped up criminal prosecutions of migrants who returned after being deported, and opened new facilities to detain migrant women with their children. Obama hoped that aggressive border enforcement would win him Republican support for broader immigration reform. The political calculus never succeeded, but the border became difficult and expensive for families to cross, and by 2015 Border Patrol apprehensions fell to about 330,000, the lowest level in four decades.

Trump took office heralding his border wall, and he almost succeeded in his goal of shutting down asylum completely. He slowed the operations of the asylum office by adding cumbersome technicalities, causing cases to pile up in ever-lengthening backlogs. He drastically limited asylum access at the land ports of entry; made migrants wait in Mexico for their U.S. immigration court hearings; reversed hard-won protections for women and victims of gang violence; and modified the rules to make it even harder to win asylum in court. Trump separated migrant children from their parents, a policy of calculated cruelty that public outrage forced him to abandon. Yet despite these hostile actions, unauthorized border crossings continued to increase, with the Border Patrol recording more than 859,000 apprehensions in 2019. Only the onset of COVID-19, which closed borders and halted travel everywhere, brought a sharp decline in illegal entries for a time.

But the pandemic also enabled Trump to implement a much more radical enforcement change. By activating the public health emergency order known as Title 42, the administration gave the Border Patrol authority to immediately expel border crossers back to Mexico, without allowing them to ask for asylum. Eventually, the order transformed the migration ecosystem—but in a very different way than Trump intended. The rapid expulsions were carried out with no formal deportation, creating no immigration record. Savvy migrants quickly realized that if they were caught, they would be expelled with no negative consequences

and could soon try to cross again. Over time, rather than slowing the influx, Title 42 attracted new migrant streams to the border. Mexicans started coming again, accounting for six in ten expulsions in the first two years of the policy, according to the Pew Research Center.

The revolving door of Title 42 also coincided with the rise of new flows from four countries that were in disastrous decline. As the pandemic's economic damage took hold after 2020, Cubans despairing of progress under their country's decaying communist regime embarked on the largest exodus from the island since the 1980s. More than seven million Venezuelans fled their country as the catastrophic mismanagement of socialist President Nicolás Maduro left hospitals without medicines and citizens scrounging for food. Many Venezuelans had settled initially in Brazil, Colombia, and other South American countries, but pandemic hardships drove tens of thousands of them to pick up and move again, making the nightmarish trek through the Darién Gap—a muddy, snake-infested jungle between Colombia and Panama—on their way to the United States. In Nicaragua, the economic push factors were compounded by President Daniel Ortega's crackdowns on street protests and political opponents as he tightened his grip on power. And in Haiti, the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and the breakdown of the state that followed left entire neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince in the hands of rival armed gangs. These four countries presented a special challenge to the Biden administration as it struggled to deal with their migratory flows.

BIDEN'S DILEMMA

Biden came to office promising a more humane approach to border security, a welcoming message that resonated across the hemisphere during his first months in the White House. Biden scaled back construction of Trump's costly border wall. He prohibited family separation and created a task force to reunite the families Trump had separated. He ended the detention of families with children. In practice, however, Biden's border enforcement has not been that different from Trump's. His administration has continued to limit asylum access at the land ports of entry. Biden tried to cancel the program that made migrants wait in Mexico for U.S. immigration court hearings, but its termination was delayed by federal courts until August 2022. And with conflicting federal court decisions about the

legality of Title 42, the rapid expulsions continued until May. Under Biden, more than 1.4 million migrants were expelled or formally deported in fiscal 2022.

Despite these policies, within months after Biden took office the border was overwhelmed, as destitute migrants were drawn by the Title 42 churn and the magnet of a rapidly recovering economy in the United States. But border officials were unusually hamstrung in their ability to constrain the new flows. In fiscal 2022, Border Patrol agents made about 571,000 stops of people from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela—exceeding for the first time the stops of migrants from the Northern Triangle countries, according to an analysis by the Migration Policy Institute. But because of the lack of diplomatic cooperation between the United States and those governments, U.S. authorities could not deport Cubans, Nicaraguans, or Venezuelans back home. During 2022, Mexico also refused to accept most Title 42 expulsions of people from those countries. Deportations to Haiti, meanwhile, were difficult for different reasons. In September 2021, thousands of Haitians had arrived all at once in Del Rio, Texas, an episode that became notorious when Border Patrol agents on horseback were photographed rousting them back into the Rio Grande. After many of those Haitians were sent back to their country, the outcry from Black activists and lawmakers pressured the administration to curtail deportations of Haitians.

Rather than slowing the influx, Title 42 attracted new streams of migrants.

Further complicating the situation, smugglers were steering all these migrants to cross at smaller cities like Del Rio and Eagle Pass in Texas and Yuma, Arizona, where frontline detention facilities were limited. To avoid dangerous overcrowding in Border Patrol cells, U.S. officials had little choice but to release migrants into the United States, sometimes thousands in a single day. They were granted a temporary permission known as a parole, and some were given ankle bracelets or mobile GPS tracking apps for electronic monitoring. They were given paper notices to check in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement or to show up in immigration courts at their destination, usually on dates in the distant future. Most of these migrants were eager to move on from the borderlands, and in addition to Governor Abbott's political busing ploy, humanitarian groups, in

a spirit of assistance, were also putting them on buses to Chicago, Denver, New York, Washington, D.C., and other cities.

Scrambling to curb the flows, in October 2022, the DHS started a novel parole program for Venezuelans, allowing them to come by air to stay and work for two years if they applied from home and identified a financial sponsor in the United States. Venezuelans who crossed the border without documents were barred from the parole and expelled to Mexico. In January, the parole program was expanded to Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua. The administration agreed to accept a total of 30,000 people a month from the four countries, opening an expansive new legal portal. The Mexican government agreed to cooperate, accepting up to 30,000 expulsions each month of citizens from those countries who had crossed the border unlawfully. The Biden administration also started testing its mobile app, called CBP One, which allows migrants to use their phones, before they reach the United States, to schedule appointments at land ports of entry, including Brownsville and El Paso in Texas, Nogales in Arizona, and San Diego, where they can arrive and ask to enter.

The initial effect of the parole programs was startling. From December 2022 through March 2023, Border Patrol encounters of migrants from the four countries declined 90 percent, while more than 100,000 of their citizens came legally to the United States. But on the Mexican side of the border, frustration continued to build. For the thousands of migrants jammed into shelters and tent squats, each morning was a frantic hustle to try to score one of no more than 1,000 appointments available each day through the CBP One app. The app had trouble recognizing Black faces; it gave appointments to parents but not their children. In Brownsville, smugglers claimed they had figured out how to hack into the system and began selling appointments for as much as $1,000. Migrants who were acutely sick or in danger from cartel thugs needed sophisticated help from lawyers to get priority. But the end of Title 42 has deepened a dilemma for legal aid and humanitarian groups at the border and across the country. Rebuking Biden's plan, they have called for full restoration of asylum along the border. But even before the order was lifted, their capacities to provide the legal counsel, shelter, and social services that migrants would need to succeed in the system were already overwhelmed. While migrants kept coming, aid providers in receiving cities were intensely frustrated that they did not have anywhere near enough resources to assist them.

BORDERLAND BROOKLYN

On the ground floor of New York's gritty Port Authority Bus Terminal, day after day, dozens of migrants disembarked to be registered with city agencies, offered health services, and sent to emergency shelters. Mayor Adams said New York was determined to set an example of welcome, but after trimming $1.6 billion from other city services to pay the costs, he also planned to bus some asylum seekers to communities upstate. Governor Kathy Hochul allocated $1 billion in the state budget to help the city, and in May the federal government finally came up with $30 million for New York.

The real gateway in New York City is at the immigration courts downtown. At four each morning, long lines form of people appearing for hearings. Under the Biden administration, the courts have worked to reduce the staggering backlogs. Dozens of judges have been hired, bringing the number to more than 600 nationwide. In the New York courts, improved technology enables lawyers to beam into hearings remotely, allowing them to represent more people, and with the help of city legal aid programs, asylum seekers have a better chance of getting legal counsel than just about anywhere else in the country. Still, for migrants arriving in the last year, at the current pace in the clogged courts, it will be at least three years before their claims will get a decision from a judge.

Many people in the new cohort may have strong cases of persecution because they clashed with autocratic governments or were victims of gangs or sexual abuse. But many, perhaps the majority, are refugees from poverty who will struggle to convince judges that they qualify. Consider the case of Alexis J., a 42-year-old Venezuelan who was camped in March at a cruise terminal in Brooklyn that the city had taken over for a barracks for migrant men. His reasons for fleeing were simple and basic. "You can't live in Venezuela anymore," he said. "You go out to look for food for your children and you come home with nothing." How he would turn that compelling human motivation into a case of persecution was unclear. In New York, one of the most asylum-friendly jurisdictions in the country, just one in three asylum claims was granted in 2022; for all U.S. immigration courts the median was one in ten.

What Alexis J. and other asylum seekers want most urgently is employment. But by law, migrants must wait at least 180 days after they file an asylum application to receive a work permit. Because of processing backlogs at the DHS, it will likely be more than a year

before recent asylum seekers will be legally authorized to work. Many are not waiting around. They are picking up off-the-books jobs as delivery cyclists, office cleaners, construction hands, and farm laborers, already becoming undocumented workers. "They don't want our free shelter. They don't want free food," Adams said in exasperation after visiting migrant shelters. "There's only one thing they ask for. They're saying, 'Can we work?'"

INNOVATE OR IMPLODE

In the initial weeks after Title 42 ended, the new Biden restrictions seemed to be working better than expected. Although the administration had been bracing to encounter as many as 10,000 migrants a day, the numbers in May were lower than they had been before the order was lifted. To enforce the new asylum rule, more than 1,000 DHS asylum officers were sent to interview border crossers while they were still detained in U.S. facilities, to see whether they met the requirements—to have an appointment with the CBP One app or show an asylum denial by a transit country—and if not, to line them up for deportation. The United States has been flying dozens of deportation flights per week. Officials said they were fixing flaws in the app to make appointments easier to obtain, and on many days more than 1,000 migrants were able to come in legally through the ports of entry. But most unauthorized border crossers faced deportation, a devastating end for those who had initiated their journeys in desperate fear. A five-year ban on reentry was being applied, and those who violated it could face criminal prosecution.

Biden's tougher border enforcement is the centerpiece of a broader strategy that aims to reshape access to protection across the Western Hemisphere. In April, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the creation of two regional processing centers, in Colombia and Guatemala, where U.S. refugee officers will work alongside UN officials to screen people to come to the United States as refugees, or through other family or labor migration programs. Building on the Los Angeles Declaration, a migration cooperation agreement joined by 21 countries at the Summit of the Americas in June 2022, the administration hopes to establish more than 100 centers throughout the hemisphere. Aside from the existing parole programs, new family reunification programs were added for Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Biden committed to doubling the number of refugees from the Western Hemisphere this year. But administration officials acknowledge that this hemispheric configuration will take time to put in place. In the meantime, the main impact of Biden's plan is to close the opening for asylum along the border.

The president's efforts have gained him little political favor. House Republicans, scorning Biden's measures, passed a border security bill that includes only draconian enforcement, although it has virtually no chance of passage in the Democratic-controlled Senate. The American Civil Liberties Union, which litigated successfully to halt Trump's transit ban, filed a similar lawsuit against Biden's rule. A Trump-appointed federal judge in Florida blocked the administration from using certain parole programs to release asylum seekers, a ruling that could seriously hamper the administration's approach. Because Biden's policies were implemented by executive action without congressional approval, they are always susceptible to challenges from the left and the right in the courts.

In 2022, U.S. immigration courts granted only around one in ten asylum claims.

In all the polarized furor, there has been little discussion of the need for reform of the asylum system itself. But outside Washington, in places where migrants have landed, there is growing bipartisan recognition that it needs to be fixed. City and state officials and humanitarian and legal rights organizations are calling on Biden to reorganize asylum, drawing on the model of the refugee program, to provide orderly reception and faster screening of migrants and federal support for their resettlement. Border city officials and groups want more access to asylum at the ports of entry. Instead of forcing migrants through rushed interviews in detention facilities, they say, the administration should set up reception centers where border authorities, legal aid groups, and resettlement organizations could combine forces, drawing on cooperation that already exists in many border cities, to screen and triage migrants and organize assistance for those who qualify. Legal experts propose giving DHS asylum officers the power to make decisions on claims, bringing faster resolutions and reducing the number of cases going to the courts; the DHS experimented with this idea in a pilot program last year. Advocates want funding

for legal representation and for case management programs that have a record of ensuring that asylum seekers comply with court dates.

City and state officials are also pushing the administration to let asylum seekers work. In March, Adams and more than 50 other mayors called on Biden to speed up work permits for migrants with pending claims. Two Republican governors, Eric Holcomb of Indiana and Spencer Cox of Utah, proposed a program to allow states to sponsor asylum seekers and other immigrants based on labor needs. In their two states combined, they said, there were 327,000 job openings in farm and dairy work, health care, and low-wage service industries. Senator Robert Menendez, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and other Democrats have made similar proposals, calling on Biden to use his authorities to create a program for states to bring in migrant workers.

Biden's strategy may yet succeed in reducing unlawful crossings. But in order to fortify border control in an age of mass migration, the president has abandoned a humanitarian principle—to protect those seeking refuge—that is enshrined in U.S. and international law and core to American values. Moreover, his policies will not end the underlying crisis. The reality is that officials in Washington will have to keep improvising at the border until the failings of asylum are reformed, and for that, Congress must act. Lawmakers will have to update and clarify the persecution standard to encompass victims of organized criminal violence, sexual abuse, and other nonpolitical violations; simplify the screening process; and specify the consequences for migrants whose claims are denied. More urgently, lawmakers must act to restore asylum to its purpose by expanding alternative legal avenues for labor and family immigration.

The prospects for solutions from Congress in the coming electoral year are dim, but for the country, the stakes become higher every day. According to the State Department, more than 20 million people in the Western Hemisphere are displaced from their homes. If new streams of migrants head for the United States, the border could become even more dangerous and disorderly, wearing out the generosity of border-state Americans and sending more asylum seekers to overburdened cities such as New York. Without reforms, the United States will perpetuate a system that draws more people into irregular migration, does not serve the American economy, and could leave hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the country in perpetual legal limbo.

REVIEW ESSAY

The End of Democratic Capitalism?

How Inequality and Insecurity Fueled a Crisis in the West

DARON ACEMOGLU

The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism
BY MARTIN WOLF. Penguin Press, 2023, 496 pp.

A World of Insecurity: Democratic Disenchantment in Rich and Poor Countries
BY PRANAB BARDHAN. Harvard University Press, 2022, 240 pp.

The world is in the throes of a pervasive crisis. The gap between rich and poor has widened in most countries. Although industrialized economies are still growing, the real incomes of people working in them have barely increased since 1980, and in some places, such as the United States, the real wages of low-skilled workers have dropped sharply. The economic malaise has a corollary in politics: democracy is floundering. According to Freedom House, more countries have lost freedom than gained it every year for the past 17 years. Authoritarianism seems to be on the rise. For many governments, China's statist form of capitalism offers a tempting model. Russia, under President Vladimir Putin, has launched the biggest war in Europe since the end of World War II. The twenty-first century so far has been marked by repression, turbulence, and the disintegration of democratic institutions.

Two thought-provoking recent books seek to anatomize these pessimistic times in fresh ways. In *The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, Martin Wolf, a veteran economics commentator at the *Financial Times*, suggests that the root cause of this malaise lies in the breakdown of the relationship between capitalism and liberal democracy. In *A World of Insecurity,* the economist Pranab Bardhan argues

DARON ACEMOGLU is an economist and Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a co-author of *Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity*.

Illustration by John Lee

that the ills plaguing the world are best understood not in terms of inequality but in terms of insecurity—simmering economic and social anxiety about job loss, declining incomes, poverty, and cultural change.

Bardhan opens his book with a warning from the German novelist Thomas Mann, who wrote in 1938 that the biggest mistake that people in democracies can make is "self-forgetfulness." Mann feared that it was dangerously easy for societies to take democracy for granted, erasing from the collective memory the difficult process of creating the institutions underpinning self-government and assuming that these institutions were invulnerable. This sentiment is shared by both authors. In a slew of countries, people have committed the sin that so concerned Mann, failing to uphold democracy, the duties of citizenship, and the goal of shared prosperity.

Politicians, pundits, and the well-off are in shock that their fellow citizens are turning to troubling alternatives to democracy—or, at the very least, to the form of democracy that was offered to them. Democracy is not perfect, these concerned commentators insist, but it is the best option available. Some intellectuals blame democracy's struggles on the public. People are not mature enough to make democracy work, they claim. In their view, citizens have become incompetent or have succumbed to the lure of authoritarianism in a time of uncertainty. Or as the anti-enlightenment French philosopher Joseph de Maistre expressed it more succinctly, "Every nation gets the government it deserves." But Wolf and Bardhan have it right: the problem is that institutions have failed people, not the other way around.

Both authors turn to the state for solutions. Bardhan argues that modern societies can reverse this trend by more equitably distributing wealth, using a range of tools, notably universal basic income—a regular payment to all people in a country no matter their means. Wolf thinks the answer lies in strengthening social safety nets and investing in better jobs. Neither author pays sufficient attention to another important fix: regulating technology so that it will improve workers' productivity rather than eliminate their jobs. Doing so would also help address the grievances that have fueled much dissatisfaction, especially in the hollowed-out industrial heartlands of the West.

But both authors rightly recognize a fundamental obstacle to any solution: all these measures will be difficult to implement if people refuse to trust the very institutions that govern their lives.

SECURITY DILEMMA

The two books begin with a detailed examination of how democracy started to crumble, including the factors that led to heightened inequality, insecurity, and the loss of agency among populations in rich and poor countries alike. They then explain why these tensions have led to an authoritarian turn in places as diverse as Brazil, Hungary, India, Turkey, and the United States.

But their explanations differ. Bardhan focuses more on inequality and suggests that as income gaps between the rich and the poor have widened, economic insecurity has risen. His analysis is

refreshingly concise and is often backed by recent academic studies.

Wolf provides a more sophisticated and expansive account, highlighting structural weaknesses in the particular version of democracy that the West has come to practice over the last five decades, a form of governance that has overlooked the poor and the working class. Instead, many democracies have enthusiastically embraced rapid globalization, deregulation, and other arrangements that have favored the interests of capital over those of labor. Leaders claimed that these changes were in everybody's interest, but in reality, people at the bottom of the social ladder bore the costs and saw few of the gains, especially as democracies failed to strengthen their safety nets to help those falling behind. Wolf correctly identifies the intimate links between the collapse of shared prosperity and the crisis of democracy.

Take the United States. From the early 1940s to the 1970s, the fruits of economic growth were broadly shared. Real wages grew rapidly—on average, by more than two percent every year for both high-skilled and low-skilled workers. And from the end of World War II to 1980, overall inequality fell substantially. Since 1980, however, real wages have continued to rise among workers with postgraduate degrees and specialized skills but have stagnated or even declined for workers, especially men, who have only a high school degree or no degree at all. In the meantime, the share of total income going to the richest one percent of households has nearly doubled—from ten percent in 1980 to 19 percent today. To put it simply, the United States abandoned shared prosperity in favor of a model in which only a minority of people benefit from economic growth while the rest are left in the dust.

The situation is less dire in many other Western countries, thanks to higher minimum wages, collective bargaining, and social norms against inequality in the workplace. All the same, most industrialized countries have seen the real earnings of low-education workers stagnate or decline while the rich have gotten richer. Given this picture, it is easy to agree with Wolf's insistence on the culpability of the economy in its failure to deliver the benefits of growth more evenly.

Bardhan, by contrast, argues that the problem is not so much inequality as it is insecurity, a broader angst about material concerns and cultural changes. As a diagnosis, this emphasis is not altogether convincing. Economic insecurity in the United States, for instance, has not increased as much as inequality in the past 50 years. Thanks to a series of social reforms begun by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, poverty has become much less common since the 1960s. Child malnutrition and poverty declined especially sharply during the pandemic, as the U.S. government bolstered the social safety net, although these improvements have since started to reverse. Over the last half century, the United States has become economically more secure, even as it has become less equal.

Bardhan himself does not see economic insecurity as the only cause of democracy's decline. He suggests that cultural insecurity is also to blame because relatively privileged groups, such as white men in the United States,

are feeling threatened by the weakening of old social hierarchies. He is right that the current antidemocratic turn around the world has a major cultural element. But whether cultural insecurity is the right framework to understand it is less clear since several aspects of disruptive social change were even more rapid in Europe and the United States in the 1950s and 1960s—periods in which democracy did not decline significantly.

THE ILLUSION OF MERITOCRACY

Although Wolf forgoes a single organizing label for democracy's ills, he recognizes that one of their key causes is the loss of democratic citizenship—the idea that for a democracy to work, citizens must assume responsibilities toward their community and institutions. Wolf's account includes a long history. Ancient Greeks viewed democracy as closely entangled with the duties of citizens, including defending their city or state and helping the people around them. But Western democracy in the late twentieth century became decoupled from the duties of citizenship. Masses were encouraged to exercise democratic power while being absolved from having to make sacrifices for the good of others.

The disconnect became almost farcical during the presidency of George W. Bush. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, while the United States prepared to enter two major wars, the president told Americans what their duty would be. "Fly and enjoy America's great destination spots," Bush said. "Get down to Disney World in Florida." Only a small number of people, many from low-income backgrounds, were expected to join the military and risk their lives for their country. The rest were merely asked to overcome their fear of flying to stimulate the economy, without forfeiting their consumption or comfort. In effect, in a time of need, the president called for Americans to be consumers, not full democratic citizens.

But it is not just neoconservatives and right-wing politicians who have contributed to weakening democratic citizenship. As Wolf emphasizes, many on the left and the liberal middle have called for more open migration into industrialized countries, without reckoning with how this influx would reshape citizenship and democracy. If a large number of immigrants reject some of the foundational values and rights of their host country—such as the freedom to criticize or mock religion—they may be viewed by natives as undermining the nature of the social contract, as has happened in Denmark and France, for instance. It is hard for democracy to function when different constituencies fundamentally disagree about the nature of their republic.

Wolf also touches on, but pays insufficient attention to, another aspect of a larger cultural transformation: how the conceit of meritocracy has deepened the anxiety of less well-off workers in the West. If democracies are truly meritocratic, then people who succeed deserve their success, while those who fail deserve their failure. Of course, no society is truly meritocratic. Privilege (or the lack thereof) shapes the lives of most people. As the Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel has

emphasized, the illusion of meritocracy has had pernicious effects: many Americans who have seen their real incomes decline or stagnate are being told, implicitly or explicitly, that their misfortune is their own fault. It is no surprise, then, that many of those left behind now reject the democratic institutions emblematic of the kind of meritocracy that blames struggling people for their own plight.

TRUST FALL

Indeed, public trust in the fairness and capabilities of democratic governments has eroded throughout the industrialized world, especially in the United States, although the exact causes of this decline are still poorly understood. It is hard to expect people to fulfill their duties as citizens when their faith in state institutions is so low. Some scholars, such as the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, have blamed the waning of trust in government on the disappearance of local institutions, such as bowling clubs and churches, that served as the connective tissue for communities. With fewer ways to build cooperation and trust at a local level, people may become estranged from all institutions, and particularly from the federal ones that they have always perceived as distant. Other observers emphasize a broader decline in trust: less confidence in the intentions of business partners and neighbors, and less trust and communication between managers and workers. Many people in democracies have ceased to see themselves as part of a community, viewing their compatriots instead as strangers or members of fundamentally opposed groups.

As both Bardhan and Wolf emphasize, the functioning of state institutions depends on some degree of trust and cooperation from society. In the United States, for example, a historically low 20 percent of the public say that they trust the government to do the right thing most or all of the time. My own work with the political scientist James Robinson has emphasized that democratic institutions can survive only if civil society and state institutions are equally strong. Such a balance can also boost people's confidence in government. For example, when they believe they can sway governments and elites, citizens feel more comfortable giving such institutions a longer leash to govern. But the balance of power between civil society and the government is precarious and depends on the vigilance and political participation of regular people. Democracy cannot be engineered by clever constitutions; it requires people to get involved in the political process and make their voices heard.

Once again, it is possible to see the decimation of trust in institutions as a failing of the people. But Wolf's argument takes another tack: state institutions abandoned people first. This is clearest in the United States, where politicians, bureaucrats, and influential pundits enthusiastically supported rapid globalization and various forms of free-market fundamentalism that have deepened inequality. For example, U.S. politicians touted both the North American Free Trade Agreement and China's integration into the World Trade Organization as beneficial not just to U.S. companies but ultimately to all Americans. The same

figures also kept reassuring the public that it would soon reap the rewards, thus inflating aspirations and paralyzing efforts to build better institutions to deal with the disruptive effects of new technologies and globalization. Worse, many of these policies were presented as technocratic, scientifically supported truths. This misrepresentation facilitated the acceptance of these policies in the short run. It also further contributed to the decline of trust in state institutions and experts in the longer run.

Although it is clear that this decline in trust has led people in democracies to lose faith in their institutions, it is less clear why the disenchanted have turned toward right-wing populism and authoritarianism rather than to left-wing alternatives. Wolf and Bardhan suggest a handful of reasons, but neither sufficiently explores the motivating force of nationalism. Wolf mentions the resurgence of nationalism but does not emphasize it as a leading source of democratic erosion. Bardhan has a short chapter on nationalism that does not offer a compelling explanation for its resurgence today. Both writers see resurgent nationalism as a consequence, not a cause, of democracy's decline.

In truth, a rising tide of nationalism has turned the discontent in both rich and poor countries into support for right-wing populism, especially when skillfully fanned by politicians such as Donald Trump in the United States, Narendra Modi in India, or Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey. Regimes dubbed right-wing populist, authoritarian, majoritarian, or religiously conservative, including those in India and Turkey, are actually first and foremost nationalist in their orientation. Leaders exploit patriotic feelings to boost their popularity—and their control over the population. Such is also the case in China, where school curricula and media propaganda have stoked nationalist sentiment.

Globalization appears to play a major role in the resurgence of nationalism. It has created new inequalities, by allowing companies to avoid taxes and by failing to contribute to job creation domestically, and has deepened tensions, because it challenges social norms via the spread of ideas through the Internet, movies, television, and music.

FEUDAL LORDS AND TECH TITANS

Wolf and Bardhan both propose renewed versions of social democracy (although Wolf never uses this term), but there are big differences between the two authors' suggested fixes. Wolf argues for more equality of opportunity and investment in the welfare state. The centerpiece of his proposals is "good jobs for those who can work and are prepared to do so." This is consistent with his overall message that citizenship, democratic participation, better institutions, and shared prosperity must be built and maintained in concert. Of course, the difficulty is that nobody has a perfect recipe for creating such good jobs.

All the same, Wolf is right. Good jobs, which pay high wages and provide a sense of security and purpose, are essential for shared prosperity and democratic citizenship. It was once believed that countries with low inequality, such as Sweden, achieved

relative parity through heavy redistribution. Research by the economists Thomas Blanchet, Lucas Chancel, and Amory Gethin published in 2022 shows that this is not the case. Inequality is rooted in countries' pretax income distributions. For example, because Sweden has strong collective wage bargaining, a more equal distribution of skills across its workforce, and jobs that use these skills, wages are more equal in Sweden than they are in the United States before taxes.

For his part, Bardhan endorses a number of well-known ideas, including the dispersal of power to local governments; more international coordination on combating climate change, pandemics, and tax evasion; stronger efforts to fight corruption; and more public research supporting the development of technologies that will benefit workers (something I have also advocated over the last several years). But his main fix is a universal basic income that pays a certain cash amount to all people. The new wrinkle here is his argument that UBI would be especially powerful in developing countries such as India, where inequality is high and getting higher; public services are inefficiently provided, if at all; and there appears to be little appetite for building a better social safety net. Because Bardhan views economic insecurity as a critical driver of the current democratic crisis, he sees UBI as a potent tool to relieve economic insecurity and thereby bolster democratic institutions.

But UBI is the wrong policy aimed at the wrong problems. The trouble is not just that UBI will be costly but also that it will fail to provide people with the sense that they are contributing to society, which conflicts with the notion of citizenship on which democracy needs to be built. A 2022 study by the economists Reshmaan Hussam, Erin M. Kelley, Gregory Lane, and Fatima Zahra shows the important relationship between psychological well-being and income. The study examined attitudes toward work among Rohingya refugees in southern Bangladesh. The researchers offered some participants weekly cash and gave others an opportunity to engage in paid work. The researchers found that those who worked reported significantly improved psychological well-being, while those receiving the cash payments without work did not. Despite their poverty and difficult conditions, when given the choice, approximately two-thirds of participants were willing to forgo the cash option to take up employment for lower pay.

UBI reflects a fundamentally defeatist view of the future. It accepts that a large fraction of the population cannot contribute to society, in part because of technological advances. Accordingly, the only way forward is for a small minority to earn all the income and provide crumbs to the rest—a demoralizing conclusion.

It is also wrong to accept that new technologies and globalization will necessarily create inequality and joblessness. Throughout history, control of technology has determined how the gains from economic growth are shared. When landlords in medieval Europe controlled the most important technology of the era, such as water and wind mills, they ensured that improvements in productivity enriched them, not their workers. In the early stages

of the Industrial Revolution, when entrepreneurs rapidly introduced automated production processes and corralled workers, including women and children, into factories, they benefited, while wages stagnated and may even have fallen.

Fortunately, it is possible to change who controls technology and thus alter its application, especially in terms of whether it will disempower workers and automate work or increase worker capabilities and productivity. The reason Western countries have become much more unequal is that they have allowed a small group of entrepreneurs and companies to set the direction of technological change according to their own interests—and against those of most workers.

Although Wolf's solutions are on the right track, they do not go far enough. Modern market economies need to be fundamentally reformed; otherwise, companies will continue to overinvest in the kind of automation that replaces workers rather than enhances their productivity. Companies are also likely to double down on massive data collection and surveillance, even though these activities are anathema in a democracy.

It is up to governments to regulate and redirect technological change. If companies continue to automate without investing in training and technologies that could help workers, inequality will continue to worsen, and those at the bottom will feel even more disposable. To prevent such an outcome, policymakers must determine which broad classes of technologies can be helpful to workers and deserve public support. They also need to regulate the tech industry, including its powers to collect data, advertise digitally, and create large language models, such as the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT. And the government must give workers a voice in the process of regulating tech companies. That does not mean the government should allow labor unions to block technological change; rather, it should ensure that worker representatives can negotiate how technology is being used in workplaces.

But such regulation is very hard to devise because policies over the last four decades have destroyed trust in state institutions. It is even harder when the labor movement has been gutted and the pillars of democratic citizenship have weakened.

Democratic capitalism is indeed in crisis. Any solution must begin with a focus on restoring public trust in democracy. People in democracies are not, in fact, helpless: there are ways to create a fairer type of economic growth, control corruption, and curb the excessive power of large companies, as the economist Simon Johnson and I have argued. This will not only help reduce inequality and lay the foundations of shared prosperity; it will also demonstrate that democratic institutions work—ensuring that this crisis of democratic capitalism does not spell democracy's end.

REVIEW ESSAY

The Antiliberal Revolution

Reading the Philosophers of the New Right

CHARLES KING

Regime Change: Toward a Postliberal Future
BY PATRICK J. DENEEN. Sentinel, 2023, 288 pp.

Common Good Constitutionalism
BY ADRIAN VERMEULE. Polity, 2022, 270 pp.

Conservatism: A Rediscovery
BY YORAM HAZONY. Regnery, 2022, 256 pp.

For more than half a century, the luminaries of the mainstream American right had a clear mission and sense of where they came from. If liberals were fixated on quixotic schemes for building a perfect society, conservatives would be on hand to do the sober work of defending liberty against tyranny. Conservatives traced their roots to 1790, with the British statesman Edmund Burke's warnings about the dangers of revolution and his insistence on the contractual relationship between the inherited past and the imagined future. They counted the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott and the Austrian émigré economist Friedrich Hayek as ancestors and viewed public intellectuals, such as the American writer William F. Buckley, Jr., and people of action, such as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan, as fighters for the same cause: individualism, the wisdom of the market, the universal yearning for freedom, and the conviction that solutions to social problems will bubble up from below, if only government would get out of the way. As Barry Goldwater, the Arizona senator and forefather of the modern Republican Party, put it in *The Conscience of a Conservative*, in 1960, "The Conservative

CHARLES KING is Professor of International Affairs and Government at Georgetown University and the author of *Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century*.

looks upon politics as the art of achieving the maximum amount of freedom for individuals that is consistent with the maintenance of the social order."

Over the last decade, however, this account has given way to an alternative reading of the past. For a vocal cohort of writers and activists, the real conservative tradition lies in what is sometimes called "integralism"—the weaving of religion, personal morality, national culture, and public policy into a unified order. This intellectual history no longer reflects the easy confidence of a Buckley, nor does it advance an argument, formed primarily in conversation with the American founders, for government resting on a balance-of-powers constitution and enabling a free citizen's pursuit of happiness. Instead, it imagines a return to a much older order, before the wrong turn of the Enlightenment, the fetishizing of human rights, and the belief in progress—a time when nature, community, and divinity were thought to work as one indivisible whole.

Integralism was born on the Catholic right, but its reach has transcended its origins, now as an approach to politics, law, and social policy known to its promoters as "common-good conservatism." In states such as Florida and Texas, its worldview has informed restrictions on voting access, curbs on public school curricula dealing with race and gender, and purges of school libraries. Its legal theory has shaped recent Supreme Court decisions that narrowed the rights of women and weakened the separation between religion and public institutions. Its theology has lain behind the bans on abortion passed by nearly half of U.S. state legislatures. Its proponents will be present in any future Republican presidential administration, and in their fight against liberals and cosmopolitans, they are more likely than earlier American conservatives to look for allies abroad—not on the British or European center-right but among newer, far-right parties and authoritarian governments committed to unraveling the "liberal order" at home and abroad. "They hate me and slander me and my country, as they hate you and slander you and the America you stand for," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban told a crowd last year in Dallas, at the annual Conservative Political Action Coalition conference, a gathering of conservative activists, politicians, and donors. "But we have a different future in mind. The globalists can all go to hell."

For all these reasons, reading right-wing philosophers is the first step toward understanding what amounts to the most radical rethinking of the American political consensus in generations. Theorists such as Patrick Deneen, Adrian Vermeule, and Yoram Hazony insist that the United States' economic ills, its political discord, and its relative decline as a world power spring from a single source: the liberalism that they identify as the dominant economic, political, and cultural framework in the United States since World War II and the model that the country has spent the better part of a century foisting on the rest of the globe. Yet these ideas also point toward a deeper change in how conservatives diagnose their country's troubles. On the American right, there is a growing intuition that the problem with liberal democracy is not just the adjective. It is also the noun.

THE BEST PEOPLE

In *Regime Change*, Deneen, a political theorist at the University of Notre Dame, is motivated by a desire to rescue a country and civilization he finds in obvious decay. He decries the obscene inequalities of wealth in the United States and writes scathingly of an avowed meritocracy that really works to reproduce privilege. He sees dissolution in growing political factionalism, a weakened affinity for the nation, and what he calls the addictions of "big tech, big finance, big porn, big weed, big pharma, and an impending artificial Meta world."

According to Deneen, liberals have purposely eroded the basic forums of social solidarity—"family, neighborhood, association, church and religious community"—and now govern as a minority against the *demos*, the popular majority. In the institutions they control, from academia to Hollywood, they preach that the only reasonable life is one liberated from the constraints of duty and tradition. The assumed course from adolescence to adulthood is to learn "how to engage in 'safe sex,' recreational alcohol and drug use, [and] transgressive identities . . . all preparatory to a life lived in a few global cities in which the 'culture' comes to mean expensive and exclusive consumption goods." In the process, liberals have abandoned anyone not in the "laptop class"—mainly coastal urbanites—and have left the country's geographic middle hollowed out and in despair.

In Deneen's view, the makers of this American wasteland are not just people on the left but the country's entire political, business, and cultural elite. "What has passed as 'conservatism' in the United States for the past half-century," he writes, "is today exposed as a movement that was never capable of, nor fundamentally committed to, conservation in any fundamental sense." As a result, the problem of politics today is the crevasse that separates the powerful from the masses, a theme that Deneen follows through canonical thinkers such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Societies thrive through maintaining a "mixed constitution," with institutions of varying levels and capacities, from the national to the local, knitting together people of different social and economic classes.

To restore such an ideal system, however, true conservatives will need to take power by employing what Deneen calls "Machiavellian means to achieve Aristotelian ends." Conservatives have too long acquiesced to a broadly liberal order, he believes, which has meant allying with people who seek "the primacy of the individual," oppose the "natural family," and even engage in the "sexualization of children," a charge that he repeats twice in *Regime Change*. But today, "the many," he says, are waking up to their class concerns "as left-economic and social-conservative populists," desirous of a broadly redistributive economy and a society founded on virtue, responsibility, and predictability.

In the age of revolution that will follow the current "cold civil war," remaking the country will require "aristopopulism," a regime headed by a new elite of trained *aristoi*—from the Greek for "the best people"—"who understand that their main role and

purpose in the social order is to secure the foundational goods that make possible human flourishing for ordinary people: the central goods of family, community, good work, a culture that preserves and encourages order and continuity, and support for religious belief and institutions." This new order will favor what Deneen calls, following the British journalist David Goodhart, "somewhere people" over "anywhere people," or Americans who are embedded in thick communities of purpose as opposed to the mobile globalists now in charge. To get there, the country will need a larger House of Representatives, better vocational education, revitalized public schools, paid family leave, and reined-in corporations—goals that liberals, too, might applaud—but also more public celebration of the nation's "Christian roots" and a cabinet-level "family czar" to encourage marriage and pregnancy, an approach that, as Deneen points out, can be found in Orban's Hungary.

THE HIGHEST GOOD

Deneen's alternative to an exhausted, licentious liberalism is a form of politics that stresses "the priority of culture, the wisdom of the people," and "preserving the commonplace traditions of a polity," that is, a conservatism that seeks what he and other writers label "the common good." In their usage, that term denotes not so much valuing the commonweal as building a specific type of society: communal, local, and hierarchical. In the realm of law and practical policy, no one has done more to define this kind of common good than Vermeule, a professor at Harvard Law School.

Vermeule's *Common Good Constitutionalism* is a work of legal interpretation rather than political theory, but his aim, like Deneen's, is to recover a mode of thinking that he believes predates the Enlightenment. The measure of law is not whether it guards individual rights, which Vermeule believes are not foundational to legal order. It is whether law enables "the highest felicity or happiness of the whole political community, which is also the highest good of the individuals comprising that community." The common good is "unitary and indivisible, not an aggregation of individual utilities," a definition that means preferring judicial rulings that promote solidarity and subsidiarity: favoring obligation to one's family and community, empowering lower levels of authority such as states and towns, and upholding what Vermeule understands as natural law and the "immemorial tradition" of ancient Rome and the modern United Kingdom.

For anyone not steeped in legal theory, Vermeule's work can be hard going, but its implications come through. Human rights are legal conveniences delimited by the degree to which they serve the common good. The "administrative state"—the agencies that implement legislation—is not inherently evil, as some conservatives insist. Rather, it should simply be turned toward the realization of the common good, a point that parallels Deneen's "stewards and caretakers," the *aristoi*, who are properly educated, via the Western canon, to recognize good things when they see them.

Past Supreme Court decisions grounded in expansive individual

rights, Vermeule believes, will have to fall. "The Court's jurisprudence on free speech, abortion, sexual liberties, and related matters will prove vulnerable under a regime of common good constitutionalism." But conservatives overconcerned with individual liberty are also a problem. Government can and should judge the "quality and moral worth" of free speech. There is no absolute right to refuse vaccination if it is necessary for public health. Libertarian "property rights and economic rights will also have to go, insofar as they bar the state from enforcing duties of community and solidarity in the use and distribution of resources."

Throughout *Common Good Constitutionalism*, what purports to be a theory of law is in fact a wholesale rethinking of legitimacy. In Vermeule's view, the basis for rightful authority is not custom, charisma, or rationality, as the German sociologist Max Weber had it, but the "objective legal and moral order" that common-good constitutionalists are best placed to perceive. Democracy and elections, Vermeule says, have no special claim to delivering the common good. A "range of regime-types can be ordered to the common good, or not." Liberals have erected a constitutional order in which legitimacy derives from rights-bearing individuals who periodically choose representatives to write statutes, judge disputes, and keep the peace. But if those structures produce outcomes contrary to the common good, they will have to be dismantled. This worldview, Vermeule concedes, may prove "difficult for the liberal mind to process."

BONDS OF LOYALTY

To chart how conservatives might recover the heritage from which Deneen and Vermeule derive their theories is one of the aims of Hazony's *Conservatism: A Rediscovery*. Like Deneen, Hazony, an Israeli American scholar and president of the Herzl Institute in Jerusalem, vividly describes the hellscape produced by the liberal order and prophesizes its impending collapse. But he is open to the idea that "anti-Marxist liberals" might be brought into an alliance with conservatism properly understood, which he defines as "the recovery, restoration, elaboration, and repair of national and religious traditions as the key to maintaining a nation and strengthening it through time." The most important step, Hazony believes, is to overturn the separation of church and state and "restore Christianity as the normative framework and standard determining public life in every setting in which this aim can be attained, along with suitable carve-outs creating spheres of legitimate non-compliance." If liberals monopolized the public sphere by privatizing conservative values—encouraging one group of students to celebrate sexual diversity during Pride Month, say, but banning another from using school property for organized Bible study—then a renewed conservatism would simply flip the script. Public life would return to being unapologetically nationalist and communally religious.

For Hazony, the common good can be divined from an open-eyed examination of history and nature. People are born into existing units of loyalty, such as families and nations, a fact that in turn produces obligations toward these collectives. A family propagates itself

biologically, while a nation develops its unique language, religion, and laws to ensure its existence into future generations. Hazony follows these principles through the history of English constitutional law and the rise of the Federalists, whom he sees as the original American nation builders, to the fatal abandonment of "Christian democracy" in favor of "liberal democracy" after World War II.

Hazony's treatment of legal and political history is serious, if tendentious, but when it comes to philosophy, *Conservatism* is at base a manifesto, a literary form that aims to buck up the already converted and, as such, substitutes serial assertion for argument. "Human beings constantly desire and actively pursue the health and prosperity of the family, clan, tribe, or nation to which they are tied by bonds of mutual loyalty," he writes, a claim that raises the question of why liberals have had such an easy time subverting them all. Overall, his point of view is that of an analytical and programmatic nationalist. He believes in the unchanged continuity of culturally defined nations through time, their immemorial primacy as a form of social organization, and their universal role in underpinning legitimate states—propositions that decades of evidence-based scholarship in history and the social sciences have shown to be, to put it simply, false. Many liberals are patriotic, community spirited, and religiously devout. It is just that they do not typically feel the need to mobilize the entirety of the past to sanction those commitments.

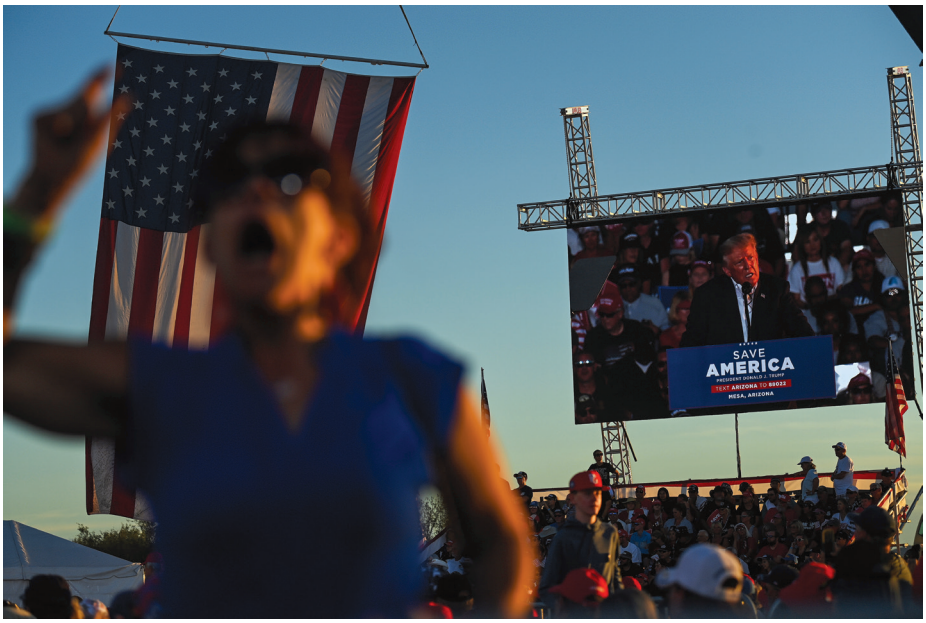
A theme that Deneen, Vermeule, and Hazony return to again and again is the family, which is often code for their disapproval of the existence of gay and transgender people. With regard to *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the 2015 Supreme Court case that legalized same-sex marriage, Vermeule finds the decision to be a textbook example of liberal overreach—but not for the reason one might think. The real problem was not that the Court usurped the power of Congress, as a conservative might once have argued. Rather, it was that "marriage can only be the union of a man and a woman" since that definition accords with biological reproduction. The ruling thus established the "ultimate valorization of will at the expense of natural reason" by separating marriage from its role in perpetuating "a continuous political community." For Deneen, too, families headed by gay couples are the preeminent example of the limitless lives that liberals feel empowered to think into being—which, like the entire "liberationist ethos of progressive liberalism," must necessarily make a victim out of people like him. As he writes, the "presumption seems to be that the only true path to human reconciliation is through the effective elimination of the one oppressor class in existence—white, heterosexual Christian men (and anyone sympathizing with them)." As with the extreme right in Russia, the European Union, and elsewhere, it does not take a deep reading of these writers to find an unshielded bigotry at the heart of their civilizational angst.

ANGER, SORROW, AND FEAR

Many people will recognize the American crisis that torments Deneen, Vermeule, and Hazony and perhaps even share their longing for sincere politicians whose goal is to make things better. But a syndrome is not the same

thing as a disease. The latter has a clear cause; the former does not. The source of the present troubles, they believe, is the entire liberal order, which, like the term "woke," ends up being a container for everything they dislike. And since these writers work mainly at the level of grand theory, their arguments skim seductively over social facts without delving into their multiple causes. Falling life expectancy, the hollowing out of public education, gun violence as the leading cause of death of American children, the homeless citizens living in tent encampments from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles—these are the result of specific policy choices, at different levels of government and born of different agendas, not of liberalism run amok.

Most worryingly, Deneen and Hazony make the grievances of an abused majority out of what are in fact the right-wing, ethnocultural commitments of a numerical minority. On issues such as state-supported health care, a higher federal minimum wage, abortion, and gun control, Americans are about equally divided or on the center-left. Even 56 percent of Catholics say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to a 2022 Pew Research Center poll. Public approval of marriage equality has increased steadily since the 1990s, to a record high of 71 percent in a Gallup poll last year. White evangelical Protestants, a mainstay of support for former U.S. President Donald Trump, constitute a historic low of 14 percent of the U.S. population, according to the Public Religion Research Institute. The elite, too, is no longer what common-good conservatives might imagine. For more than a decade, the



Fired up: U.S. President Donald Trump campaigning in Mesa, Arizona, October 2022

JOSHUA LOTT / THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

most-educated, highest-earning cultural group in the United States has been not godless cosmopolitans but Indian Americans, principally Hindus and Muslims, nearly three-quarters of whom, according to a 2020 Carnegie Endowment survey, say that religion plays an important role in their lives. In this environment, to claim that "America is a Christian nation" is no more than to say, "I wish it were."

The real worry is that a hardened political minority has already concluded that its only way of reversing these trends is to give up altogether on political participation, an independent judiciary, and human rights. Deneen, Vermeule, and Hazony provide the intellectual backfill for precisely that strategy. All three authors situate themselves inside a tradition they believe stretches into antiquity, but their work recalls a more recent one: the jeremiads about American degeneracy and last-chance renewal produced a century ago, such as Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*. Grant was a scientific racist and a progressive, which today's common-good conservatives clearly are not. But their policy recommendations are in large part the same as his: tighten immigration restrictions, maintain the supremacy of Anglo-American culture, defend the country's Christian (or, for Hazony, Christian and Orthodox Jewish) core, and shore up the nation against the "dissolute individuals" who have made a "sick society," as Hazony puts it. At the center of these prescriptions is the belief that what others might see as social change, or even progress, can be nothing but loss.

These authors' engulfing anger produces prose that is by turns elegiac, evangelizing, and blusterous, delivered with the self-assurance of a college sophomore conversant with all of human history. But more important,

their anger lays waste to their empathy. Deneen writes warmly of a world made safe for "sound marriage, happy children, a multiplicity of siblings and cousins" and "the memory of the dead in our midst." Hazony devotes the final portions of *Conservatism* to a moving account of his love for his wife and children and his thoughts on building a life of honor and virtue. Yet when it comes to other people's children, communities, flourishing, and love, these authors' disdain is shocking, like the rumble of a chanting crowd.

There is particular sorrow in seeing erudite men indulge their own cruelty. When they encourage it in others, the sorrow becomes fear. As earlier antileft writers such as Hayek insisted, any attempt to define the ends of life disconnected from the will of living beings is a form of collectivism, which in turn is the source of unfreedom and, worse, inhumanity. To throw out that line of thinking is to reject a tradition of its own: the array of ideas produced across the political spectrum, from Oakeshott to Hayek to Buckley, from Hannah Arendt to James Baldwin, which placed actual people—not nations, races, or classes—at the center of civilized society.

Today, a mobilized segment of American intellectuals, politicians, and the voting public view themselves as part of an international coalition of the aggrieved, people whose core desire is precisely the "regime change" that Deneen advocates. It is commonplace to point out that Trump, Orban, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and other authoritarian leaders are versions of the same political type, perhaps even the same psychological one. But what is even more worrying is that the United States has developed an ecosystem to produce future leaders of this sort: a party, a media space, a financial base, and now even an American school of illiberal thought. In this way the United States is in the odd position of being both the world's most ardent champion of the liberal order—meaning a rules-based, cooperative system of states that themselves profess liberal values—and one of its potential threats. As never before, which way the country leans will depend entirely on the results of future electoral cycles.

The point of liberal values—the ones embraced by many progressives, classical liberals, and mainstream conservatives alike—is not that they are timeless or guarantee happiness. It is that they rest on the one thing in social life we can all be sure of: that we will encounter other individuals, different from ourselves, with their own preferences, ambitions, and worldviews. Put aside the complicated metaphysics and speculative theology, and what is left is human beings struggling to patch a ship already at sea: to find ways to live together peacefully—and even prosper—in a changing, plural world.

Traditional American liberalism held that greater equality would enable achievement for all. Traditional American conservatism warned that grand schemes for improvement usually end up as disasters. That is still a debate worth having. But for all their differences, these older camps shared an ability to recognize tyranny when they saw it, whether in the Soviet Union, the Jim Crow South, or philosophies that claim God, History, or Nature as a comrade. On the American right, time may be running out to recover that sense of reality.

REVIEW ESSAY

China's Rewritten Past

How the Communist Party Weaponizes History

MARY GALLAGHER

Red Memory: The Afterlives of China's Cultural Revolution
BY TANIA BRANIGAN. Norton, 2023, 304 pp.

For the past 20 years or so, I have taught Chinese politics at the University of Michigan. A familiar scene unfolds most semesters: students with Chinese roots come to my office and talk about their families. These stories often begin with their decision to ask their elders about the Cultural Revolution—to unearth memories of unfathomable violence and upheaval from beneath layers of secrecy, confusion, and sometimes shame. For many, it is the first time their parents have spoken openly about politics, and it does not always go well. Others are emboldened to ask more, to begin connecting family stories to their research and fitting them along the broad arc of modern Chinese history with all its heroes and its villains.

These students, now members of China's Gen Z, are grappling with horrors that in truth lie much closer than their current lives of relative privilege and stability suggest. In this, they recall the women and men at the center of Tania Branigan's *Red Memory: The Afterlives of China's Cultural Revolution*. Branigan's subjects, too, are struggling to make sense of a partially known past. As its title signals, the book's concern is not the Cultural Revolution—China's decade of political unrest and violence from 1966 to 1976—but the way that period lives on today as trauma, as nostalgia, and as state-sponsored amnesia.

Branigan expertly documents both the power and the frailty of memory in the face of an unrelenting campaign by the Chinese Communist Party to bend

MARY GALLAGHER is Amy and Alan Lowenstein Professor in Democracy, Democratization, and Human Rights at the University of Michigan and the author of *Authoritarian Legality in China: Law, Workers and the State*.

and twist people's recollections into whatever shapes best suit the CCP in the present. Chinese President Xi Jinping is himself a master of the craft, having refashioned his family's suffering and his own victimization during the Cultural Revolution into an uplifting tale of struggle and resilience. Even Branigan's insightful analysis never quite overcomes the strictures of that self-serving narrative. Her accounts of individual brutality paint a familiar picture of the Cultural Revolution: that of a society eating itself from the inside. The state and its part in the violence—initially as instigator and later as active perpetrator—rarely enter the frame.

TEN YEARS OF CHAOS

By the time the Chinese leader Mao Zedong set off what he called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the spring of 1966, he was in his early 70s. He had spent the best part of three decades at the helm of the CCP, including 16 years as China's ruler. His feelings about the party's power had remained ambivalent throughout. Mao continually struggled to balance his desire for political control—a prerequisite for implementing his communist vision from the top down—with his suspicion that the revolution would be undone by the functionaries and bureaucrats he relied on. He needed the party but didn't trust it.

Mao's own failures did nothing to allay his paranoia. The Great Leap Forward, his four-year experiment with agricultural collectivization, had ended in catastrophe. More than 30 million people had perished in the resulting famine. In its aftermath, Mao allowed other senior CCP members to step in and manage the country's economic recovery, but he quickly grew suspicious of their attempts to revive household farming and rural markets, institutions in which he saw the shoots of capitalist exploitation. The Cultural Revolution would be his revenge on these wayward party leaders.

While sometimes referred to as "the decade of chaos," the Cultural Revolution is by now understood to have progressed in successive stages that differed widely in the type of chaos they unleashed. It began in the cities, where Mao and a small circle of radical supporters called on students to mobilize and to attack those in positions of authority. The Red Guards, as those who heeded this call were known, were front and center in the first outburst of violence. They set about targeting local party officials, teachers, school and university administrators, and representatives of the pre-communist era, such as industrialists and landlords. What looked like random and chaotic violence was in fact directed from the highest levels of government, and different factions within the Red Guards soon took to denouncing and fighting one another as they vied for the approval of Mao and other political elites.

By the end of 1966, workers were allowed to join the movement, and the violence spread from universities to workplaces across China's cities. So began the second stage: the collapse of local political order as local party leaders were ousted in favor of revolutionary committees made up of Red Guards and workers. Initial attempts

to stabilize the situation by inserting the military into these new structures achieved the exact opposite. Different parts of the People's Liberation Army sided with different warring factions of Red Guards, with some parts of the country descending into near civil war. By the end of 1968, however, the mayhem had given way to the final, longest, and deadliest stage: a unified military dictatorship led by Mao's second-in-command, Lin Biao, that forced an end to the infighting, returned factories to production, and sent students, intellectuals, and white-collar workers to the countryside en masse for "reeducation" and hard labor. These purges were accompanied by intense investigations to ferret out "class enemies" or those with foreign connections. Many remember the Cultural Revolution as a time of Red Guard excess—of the people terrorizing the votaries of the party. Few realize that for more than half that decade, the party terrorized the people.

NO SUCH THING AS A SETBACK

The terror had long since subsided when Branigan came to China as a journalist for *The Guardian* in 2008, but the search for its meaning had not. Branigan's seven years in the country coincided not only with Xi's ascent to power but also with his progressive sanitizing of the Cultural Revolution's legacy. In this, Xi differs starkly from his predecessors, especially from Deng Xiaoping, Mao's de facto successor and the country's ruler from the late 1970s to 1997. It was Deng who in 1981 presided over the CCP's first official assessment of the Cultural Revolution. Its verdict at the time was harsh and unequivocal. The Cultural Revolution had brought about "the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the country and the people since the founding of the People's Republic." It had set China back while Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—authoritarian like China but not communist—sprang ahead. In condemning Maoist radicalism, the party granted Deng the space to experiment with market reforms and loosen social controls.

Like Deng, Xi suffered personally during the Cultural Revolution: his father, a veteran party leader, fell from power and was publicly humiliated and imprisoned; his half sister died in what is believed to have been a suicide. As a teenager, Xi was subject to reprisals by the Red Guards; eventually, he was sent to the countryside for six years of hard labor. Unlike Deng, however, Xi has turned his time in Shaanxi Province into a cheerful founding myth: the hardscrabble origins of a tough, resilient servant to party and people. In interviews before he came to power, Xi spoke fondly of life in the mountain village of Liangjiahe, where he slept in a spartan cave dwelling. The hardship he suffered was edifying, an education in manhood that Xi wishes for today's youth. In recent speeches, he has worried that younger generations are too soft, full of effeminate "sissy boys" who prefer "lying flat" to hard work. Gone is the party's frank criticism of Maoist excesses. A lengthy resolution marking the CCP's 100th anniversary in 2021 offers only a brief and watered-down summary of

Culture war: students learning to use guns in Beijing, May 1971

VITTORIANO RASTELLI / CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

the late Mao era, finding, in essence, that mistakes were made.

When given the chance to speak freely, not all Chinese share Xi's nostalgia. *Red Memory* aptly captures another moment of relative candor and penance, starting just before Xi's rise to power and extending into the early years of his rule. After decades of silence, elderly citizens who as students had beaten their teachers to death and warred against one another spoke out. Among them was Song Binbin, who had taken part in one of the Red Guards' first murders in 1966. Song rose to national fame not long after, when a photographer captured her tying a Red Guard armband around Mao's sleeve at an immense rally in Tiananmen Square. Her public apology in 2014 for her involvement in the murder of one of her teachers was one of the most high-profile expressions of contrition by a former Red Guard. Coming just two years ahead of the 50th anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution, Song's public atonement, and that of others like her, raised hopes of a greater reckoning with those years of strife and carnage—and even the prospect of a kind of national catharsis.

But those hopes were short-lived. The case of Yu Xiangzhen, a former classmate of Song's whose life Branigan retraces, is instructive. In retirement, Yu attempts to recover and make sense of herself as a young witness to horrific violence by writing a blog. In the blog's early years, Yu's online writings are censored only occasionally. By the time she leaves China in 2016, authorities have shut down the site altogether.

The fate of Yu's blog is emblematic of the narrowing of civic space under Xi. Upon taking office in 2012, Xi presided over crackdowns on lawyers, labor

activists, left-wing students demanding better protection for workers, and feminists protesting domestic violence. In a speech one year into his rule, Xi blamed the collapse of the Soviet Union on "historical nihilism"—its leaders' tendency to repudiate parts of Soviet history, which in the end undermined their own legitimacy. The CCP would not make that mistake. The 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution came and went without much fanfare. To the extent the party allowed itself to remember, it would elide the worst transgressions and instead generate "positive energy." There was "no such thing as a setback," Branigan writes of the muted anniversary. "In absorbing and interpreting the calamity, the Party had actually propelled the nation along the path to its future; history was always moving forward. Even this terse and misleading account was itself pushing China towards its destiny."

Try as it may, the party cannot wipe away the memories of those who lived through the Cultural Revolution and into the reform period. Branigan's subjects eke out their own ways of understanding, remembering, and processing. In the southwestern city of Chongqing, they gather to sing "red songs" from the 1950s and 1960s that express their nostalgia for a bygone era without dramatic socioeconomic inequality. Others face the past by writing or through psychoanalysis. Literature on the Cultural Revolution is a saturated market, but only rarely does it convey as Branigan does the continuing hold of that decade on a people otherwise transformed by economic development, technological progress, and newfound social and physical mobility.

Branigan's profiles are at their most vivid when plumbing the depths of personal and lethal betrayal. Sixteen-year-old Zhang Hongbing denounced his own mother as a counterrevolutionary, which led to her execution. Students at an elite Beijing high school beat a teacher to a pulp and left her to die in the street. The brutality unleashed by mere children never ceases to leave one aghast. No less searing is Branigan's dissection of their sometimes flawed attempts at personal absolution. More than 40 years after he sent his mother to her death, Zhang, now in his 50s, finds enough blame to go around. "My mother, father and I were all devoured by the Cultural Revolution," he tells Branigan. "Society should take society's responsibility; families should take the family's responsibility; people should take their own responsibility. In particular, the responsibility also includes my mother's, because she hadn't told us that as a person you should have independent thinking. She should take responsibility too." Branigan wryly notes in conclusion that although "exonerated from the charges of counter-revolutionary thinking," Zhang's mother "was now being held to account for the leftist excesses that killed her by the son who had denounced her."

BLAME GAME

Something is lost in these accounts of personal cruelty, chilling though they may be. It is notable that Zhang blames his mother for her own execution but never so much as mentions

the CCP. "Society" and "people" are the ones who visited these horrible acts on one another. Although historical narratives such as Branigan's continue to serve up lurid tales of intimate betrayal and collective violence, much of the recent academic research on the Cultural Revolution has set its sights elsewhere. Scholars such as Andrew Walder, Dong Guoqiang, and James Chu have pointed instead to the pivotal role of political elites who skillfully manipulated students and workers such that no one felt safe enough to give anybody else the benefit of the doubt. Piecing together personal accounts, local archives, and statistical data, they find that even in the early days of the Cultural Revolution, party elites manipulated student leaders and actively directed the violence. They reveal, for instance, that Mao's wife and other stewards of the upheaval dispatched hundreds of state media reporters to university campuses to act as monitors and agitators, keeping tabs on the Red Guards while feeding them information about potential targets for condemnation and public humiliation. Research by the Sinologists Michael Schoenhals and Roderick MacFarquhar details how central leadership also instigated the brutal investigations of lower party officials and then delegated those investigations to the revolutionary forces on the ground.

It is now known that the most significant bloodletting happened not when students and workers were at each other's throats but in later years, when the party declared martial law and instituted its own reign of terror. Tens of millions suffered reprisals, and more than half of the Cultural Revolution's one million to 1.5 million deaths occurred during this latter period. For what it is worth, as Walder has pointed out, even Mao's extensive purges were far less deadly than those under Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union or under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The huge outpouring of memories, and at times even nostalgia, captured in Branigan's book reflects that fact. People lived to remember.

Emphasizing the party's culpability is hard to do in narrative accounts of the Cultural Revolution under normal circumstances, but it is harder than ever in the Xi era, when those brave enough to talk to a foreign journalist about this painful past risk being tarred as "historical nihilists" or worse. But Xi's vision of himself and of his nation as destined for greatness makes this all but inevitable, offering neither the space nor the means to make sense of self-inflicted catastrophe. His coming of age during the Cultural Revolution, although rooted in the tragedy of his father's downfall, made him into the man he is today. That path now serves as both a lesson and an inspiration, sometimes quite literally: with youth unemployment at almost 20 percent, one of the government's solutions has been to send young men from the cities to the countryside, where they can work the fields as their leader once did.

It is a tragedy unto itself that the CCP's selective history blames the people while largely exonerating the party. The message, of course, is also one for the present: Chinese people are so unruly that they can never rule themselves.

RESPONSES

Can the Two-State Solution Be Saved?

Debating Israel's One-State Reality

Dangerous Delusions

MICHAEL OREN

Anyone seeking to understand why U.S. policy in the Middle East keeps failing—especially on the Israeli-Palestinian issue—need only read "Israel's One-State Reality" (May/June 2023) by Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch, and Shibley Telhami. The essay suffers from the same refusal to face facts that led the United States to launch abortive wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya and reflects the same devotion to ideological nostrums that convinces Washington, time and again, to brand dictators as reformers and allies as pariahs. The result is a scattershot argument that blames Israel for the death of the two-state solution and urges the United States to shun its closest friend in the Middle East in order to force it to abandon its Jewish identity. Along the way, the authors rehash fashionable academic libels of Israel, deny the Palestinians agency, and offer no pathway to peace.

A cogent postmortem of the two-state solution would have begun by asking whether it was ever really alive. The answer is no. The reason relates not only to the 450,000 Israelis who have settled beyond the borders established after the 1967 war and the rise of the Israeli right but also—and more fundamentally—to Palestinian opposition. Well before a single settlement was established, the Palestinians violently rejected the two-state offers of 1937 and 1947. Their rejection of two-state plans in 2000, 2001, and 2008 merely reiterated this long-standing Palestinian policy.

Because they deny that the Jews constitute a people, Palestinian leaders have never accepted the United States' formula of "two states for two peoples." They never committed to the "end of claims, end of conflict" principle integral to any peace agreement, and they never ceased seeking to destroy Israel's Jewish character through the return of millions of Palestinian refugees. No Palestinian leader has ever demonstrated the will or the ability to reconcile with Jewish statehood, and none would likely

MICHAEL OREN is a former Member of the Israeli Knesset, Deputy Minister in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, and Israeli Ambassador to the United States. He is the author of *2048: The Rejuvenated State*.

survive long if they did. The Palestinians have given no indication that they intend to build the kinds of stable, transparent institutions that form the foundations of a modern state, that they remain committed to creating the "secular, democratic" polity envisioned by the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization, or that they can sustain sovereignty over any areas allotted to them without ushering in chaos. Realizing these facts, many Israeli leftists have concluded that the Palestinians never actually wanted a two-state solution; they wanted only Israel's dissolution.

A clear-sighted examination of the demise of two states would also have traced Israeli public opinion from the early 1990s, when most Israelis favored that outcome, to today, when far fewer do. Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and from Gaza in 2005, which the Israeli government undertook in the hope of peace, yielded only thousands of terrorist rockets targeting Israeli civilians. The glow of the Oslo accords in the mid-1990s was similarly eclipsed by the suicide bombings of the second intifada between 2000 and 2005 and the murder of 1,000 Israelis—more than ten times the losses the United States suffered in the 9/11 attacks, as a proportion of the population.

Finally, a sound analysis would have acknowledged not just the election of Israel's most right-wing government in history but also the lack of a legitimate and capable Palestinian leadership. And it would have accepted that even centrist Israelis would rather live with a status quo that has proved corrosive but sustainable for 56 years than die in a failed multinational state such as Iraq, Lebanon, or Syria.

If Palestinians are discouraged by Israeli settlement building, Israelis are disgusted by Palestinian textbooks that teach children to slaughter Jews. Consequently, many Israelis recognize what the philosopher Micah Goodman calls "Catch-67," the belief that although the absence of a Palestinian state might challenge Israel's Jewish and democratic character, the creation of a Palestinian state threatens its very existence. A Palestinian state run by a president who for the past 17 years has been too frightened of his fellow Palestinians to stand for reelection is likely to devolve into a Gaza-like terrorist state overnight, bringing every Israeli town within rocket, perhaps even rifle, range.

But it is not just the authors' analysis that is flawed; so, too, are their recommendations. They believe that by slashing the annual $3.8 billion in aid it sends to Israel, the United States can force the country to forfeit Jewish independence. The notion is ludicrous. Although Washington once supplied almost half of Israel's defense budget, that share is now less than one-fifth. And U.S. aid to Israel remains broadly popular among Americans, many thousands of whom work in industries it subsidizes.

Similarly risible is the authors' suggestion that Israel could be pressured into relinquishing its Jewish identity if Washington ceased defending it at the United Nations. In 2022, the UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council condemned Israel more frequently than they condemned all other countries combined; the threat of a more lopsided record would hardly prod Israelis into sacrificing their identity. And browbeating an ally will not help Washington bolster its dwindling influence in the

Middle East, underscored in early 2023 by China's mediation of a rapprochement deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

A better course would have been for the authors to consider how even a diplomatically depleted United States could help the cause of peace. It could seek to strengthen the Palestinian economy and infrastructure, launch technological and infrastructure projects, and help increase the number of Palestinian workers entering Israel each day. Simultaneously, the United States could resist efforts to change the status quo—precisely the Biden administration's position—until political conditions allow for stronger initiatives. Meanwhile, viable alternatives to the two-state solution could be considered, including plans for federations, condominiums, and trusteeships.

The authors ignore all such options. Although they stress the need for "possible alternatives," they explore the only plan that is patently unworkable. Instead of striving to understand Israel's complex reality, they rail against "Jewish supremacy," a term coined by the Nazis and later adopted by the Ku Klux Klan; implicitly support the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel; and cite Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and professors of Middle East studies—all considered blatantly anti-Israel by many—to label Israel an "apartheid state." Failure to grant full citizenship and equal rights to all Palestinians in the occupied territories "will complicate Israel's relations with the rest of the world," the authors claim, ignoring Israel's burgeoning ties with China, India, and African countries. By refusing to assign virtually any responsibility to the Palestinians—for rejecting peace offers, for valorizing terror, for sending payments to imprisoned murderers of Jews—the authors reduce them to props in an Israeli morality play.

The article should be required reading in any course on the United States' tragic history in the Middle East. It helps explain how American policymakers who think like the authors could convince themselves that democracy could be imposed on the region by force, that the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad was a peacemaker, and that Iran could become a responsible regional power. It shows how failure to confront Middle Eastern realities not only impedes peace but often leads to disaster.

Don't Abandon Two States

MARTIN INDYK

Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch, and Shibley Telhami make a strong case that Israelis and Palestinians now live in a "one-state reality" that encompasses all the territories that Israel controls. Indeed, after 56 years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, this increasingly ugly situation—which, in the authors' words,

MARTIN INDYK is the Lowy Distinguished Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Israel under President Bill Clinton and U.S. Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations under President Barack Obama.

is "based on relations of superiority and inferiority"—has eclipsed the hope for a negotiated two-state solution.

It is hard to see what could change the status quo. A third intifada appears to be looming, but even if a renewed paroxysm of violence were to alter Israel's calculus about the cost of its current policies, much more would be needed before a two-state solution might be possible again: new leadership on both sides, a rebuilding of trust between the two peoples, a reconciliation between the Islamist Hamas organization and the Palestinian Authority, and an end to violence, incitement, and settlement expansion. None of these requirements are in sight.

Yet something must change, not just because Palestinians deserve "equal measures of security, freedom, opportunity, and dignity," as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken often declares. Change is also necessary because the status quo is eating away at Israel's Jewish character and democratic soul and is eroding support for the country among liberals in the United States, especially in the American Jewish community and the Democratic Party.

But the answer is not to abandon the two-state solution in favor of pursuing equal rights for Palestinians in a binational Israeli state. The Palestinians have struggled long and hard to gain overwhelming international recognition of their right to national self-determination. To forsake those efforts for a struggle for individual rights would be a terrible mistake. Doing so would condemn the Palestinians to a never-ending conflict with Israeli Jews, who are not about to agree to turn the Jewish state, which they have similarly struggled hard to build, into a binational state in which Palestinians would constitute a majority. Abandoning the two-state solution would also be a gift to the settler movement and those on the right and far-right in Israel who support it. They have long endeavored to block a Palestinian state, the better to claim all the territory in the West Bank for themselves. And it would be a gift to Iran and Hamas, both of which seek their own one-state solution.

The authors admit that if the United States and the rest of the international community pressed for equal rights, they "might also push the parties themselves to seriously consider alternative futures." One theoretical possibility, they note, is the resurrection of the two-state solution. Another is the termination of "Israel's military rule over the Palestinians," which is the precondition for any two-state solution. So the authors want to have it both ways.

Nevertheless, they believe the most urgent task is to achieve equal rights for the Palestinians within Israel, including, presumably, voting rights. To achieve this, they advocate a series of draconian measures to isolate and condemn Israel in international forums, to brand it as a proto-apartheid state, to condition and sharply reduce U.S. military and economic aid (even though the United States does not, in fact, provide Israel with economic aid), to give up on promoting the normalization agreements between Israel and Arab governments known as the Abraham Accords, and even to impose targeted sanctions on Israeli leaders. In short, they would have the United States transform Israel from a strategic ally into a pariah state. They admit that "the political backlash would be fierce," which raises the question of why any American

politician who wants to gain or stay in office would pursue this approach. But if they are serious about these steps, why not explicitly wed them to the objective of resurrecting the two-state solution? That outcome would have a much better chance of securing Palestinian rights than a quixotic effort to delegitimize Israel and force it to abandon its Zionist identity.

Getting from today's one-state reality to a two-state solution is the challenge. Since the Biden administration is committed to achieving a two-state solution, it needs to take more vigorous steps to restore both sides' belief in the possibility of achieving one. At the top of the list must be preventing Israel from consolidating the one-state reality, especially through settlement activity. The administration should not just oppose the Netanyahu government's intention to legalize more than 100 illegal settlement outposts but also threaten to stop shielding Israel from retribution in international forums for its settlement policies if it goes ahead with the plan.

In the 60 percent of the West Bank that Israel controls completely, the Biden administration should press the Netanyahu government to hand territory over to the Palestinian Authority so that Palestinian cities and towns can grow. This is provided for in the Oslo accords, to which the Netanyahu government recommitted Israel in the Aqaba Joint Communique in February 2023. The Biden administration also needs to lead an international effort to bolster the institutions of the Palestinian state-in-the-making, beginning with its security services, banking system, and educational and health-care structures.

Already, the Biden administration has succeeded in recruiting Egypt and Jordan to help lay the groundwork for an eventual resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. It should do the same with Saudi Arabia, which has indicated that it will fully normalize relations with Israel in return for a security guarantee and arms sales from the United States. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is lobbying U.S. President Joe Biden to accommodate these requirements, but Biden should consider doing so only if Israel and Saudi Arabia are both willing to take positive steps vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

It is not time to abandon the two-state solution. Rather, the time has come to reinvigorate it.

Hard Truths Are Not Enough

DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN

In their essay—as in their chapter in *The One State Reality*, the recent volume they co-edited (and to which I contributed)—Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch, and Shibley Telhami leave defenders of the Israeli and Palestinian status quo with nowhere to hide. What they dub the "one-state reality" may not be identical to apartheid, in their view, but people know the spirit of apartheid when they see it.

As unflinching as the authors are, however, at points they do not go far enough. For instance, they note that

DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN is a Tel Aviv–based Policy Fellow at Century International and a columnist at *Haaretz*.

Israel maintains a "draconian blockade" of Gaza, controlling the territory's coastline, airspace, and boundaries. This is correct, of course, but understates how Israeli control both harms Palestinian society and perpetuates itself. Israel severely restricts the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza, effectively controlling the economy. Israel also controls the territory's electricity supply, the allocation of frequencies for communication networks, and even the population registry that regulates where Gaza residents can live. It has used this authority to stymie industry, housing construction, medical care, sewage treatment, and water purification in a region where neighborhoods have been repeatedly demolished by war.

Thus, the problem is not just who controls Gaza, but how it is controlled: Israel's mode of control destroys Palestinian social and political cohesion and feeds military confrontation, thereby justifying perpetual Israeli domination.

If the authors understate the corrosive, self-perpetuating effects of the one-state reality, they overstate the case for a tougher U.S. policy—which, to be clear, I support. They warn that the one-state reality threatens Palestinians in ways that could destabilize the Middle East, leading to solidarity protests across the region. But the cataclysmic events of the last decade—the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, Iran's expanding sphere of influence—had nothing to do with the plight of the Palestinians. The last time masses of Arab citizens rallied for the Palestinians was never. To be sure, if the United States took a harder line on Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, that could slightly improve American credibility in the region, but it would come at an enormous political price for any American politician or party that dares to lead such a process. The definite political costs of a tougher U.S. policy on Israel—which cannot deliver a peace agreement on its own—might well outweigh the potential benefits for U.S. leaders.

Similarly, the authors argue that Israel will lose legitimacy if it continues to beat back the Palestinians through "brute strength." Yet even they admit that pro-Palestinian movements around the world are deeply fragmented; the younger generations of Palestinians are leaderless. Transnational solidarity movements do not threaten normal life in Israel; they are little more than a political nuisance. Worse, they can fuel Israeli *hasbara*, or pro-Israel messaging, and the proliferation of anti-boycott laws in the United States. In short, Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories was never likable, but its critics' biggest mistake was believing that it was unsustainable. I made this mistake myself.

Leaving aside considerations of realpolitik, there are pressing reasons for Israel to change course and for the United States to care that it does. Israelis hate to admit it, but the bitter struggle over proposed judicial reforms and the state of Israeli democracy now gripping the country cannot be separated from the issue of Palestinian rights. There is no democracy for those living under occupation, but nor is there democracy for those doing the occupying. Israel is sacrificing the core values of equality, human rights, and representation of the people under its control. The country's Supreme Court has repeatedly legitimized policies of occupation; Israelis now defending the court in the name of democracy cannot flee the contradiction forever.

For its part, the United States should be troubled by the fact that Israel flouts international law, legitimizes territorial conquest, and thwarts Palestinian self-determination. Washington's support for those policies only lends credibility to the Vladimir Putin school of international relations, which portrays the rules-based international order as a farce.

The authors' U.S. policy prescriptions are valuable, but their effectiveness would depend on the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves. Neither are passive participants in this conflict. The authors assert that "leaders on both sides do not lead," but this is not true of the Israeli side; leading by obfuscation is still leading. In fact, Israel's current government has been clearer than most of its predecessors about seeking total and irreversible Jewish control over the occupied territories. The United States should insist that Israel openly state its political vision for the Palestinians. Let Israel choose the words to describe permanent control over a subcaste of about five million civilians who lack rights and representation.

The Palestinians, too, need to define a new national aim. This will help reinvigorate both U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue and Palestinian solidarity movements. The leadership of the Palestinian Authority still officially supports a two-state solution, but surveys show that most Palestinians (like most Israelis) do not, and they despise the Palestinian Authority to boot. Yet no alternative unifying vision for national self-determination has gained ascendance.

Without realistic endgames on either side, it is no surprise that the United States can't get the parties closer to a solution. Once both lay out their visions, the United States can develop a strategy, not just tactics, to narrow the gaps between them—or between their political aims and basic standards of democracy and human rights.

Change Must Start With the Palestinians

ASAD GHANEM

The "one-state reality" described by Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch, and Shibley Telhami is a product of Israeli policies that have been aided by the inaction of Arab states and abetted by almost reflexive U.S. support for the Jewish state. Yet this condition of Israeli domination and ethnic supremacy has also been enabled by the Palestinians themselves. Their role in shaping the grim reality of their homeland is missing from this otherwise insightful essay.

The fractiousness of the Palestinians and their failure to organize a unified national movement has played a central part in reinforcing an unjust system that has been in place since what the Palestinians call the *nakba*, or "catastrophe," in which the majority of Palestinian Arabs were forcibly uprooted in 1948. The inability to formulate a shared vision for the country they seek to establish has prevented the Palestinians from garnering international support and persuading many Israelis to back their cause. Such a shared vision is necessary to move from

ASAD GHANEM is Professor of Political Science at the University of Haifa.

something akin to one-state apartheid to something that at least resembles a one-state democracy in all of historical Palestine in which equal rights could be ensured for all Palestinians and Israelis.

The failures of the Palestinian national movement are often blamed on external factors—chief among them British colonial policies, Israeli aggression, and Arab regimes' lack of commitment to the Palestinians. But internal factors have also contributed. The Palestinians have not only struggled to build a coherent national movement; they have failed to remain steadfastly committed to their own cause despite the horrors done to them by the United Kingdom, Israel, and Arab regimes.

These shortcomings are especially glaring when one compares Palestinian organizational efforts over the last seven decades with those of the Jewish community in Palestine before 1948 and those of other Arab nationalist movements in the region—especially those in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria—during the struggle against colonialism. Whereas the leaders of these nationalist movements succeeded in rallying the bulk of their societies around clear political objectives, Palestinian elites failed to do so. Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership continues to flounder today. Seventy-five years have passed since the *nakba*, but the Palestinians have made little progress toward achieving their goals.

In the last two decades, the Palestinian national movement has all but disintegrated. The Palestine Liberation Organization, once the beating heart of the movement, has largely disappeared from the scene. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, is seen by many Palestinians as being controlled by Israel, effectively serving as a tool to normalize Palestinian existence within a single state dominated by Israel. And in Gaza, the Islamist Hamas organization comes very close to cooperating with Israel in order to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Palestinian population there. Meanwhile, the competition between the two Palestinian quasi governments helps Israel maintain control and solidify its dominance.

Broadly speaking, the Palestinians are divided into four groups with fundamentally different aims and objectives. Most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza aspire to create an independent Palestinian state in those territories. The Palestinians in refugee camps throughout the region and in the diaspora primarily aim to return to their homeland, regardless of its official status. Most Palestinian citizens of Israel seek equality within that country. And finally, Palestinians in east Jerusalem, who are caught between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, want to see Jerusalem as the future capital of an independent Palestinian state, which seems less and less likely to happen. But in a one-state reality controlled by Israel, all these groups have hit a dead end.

The first step on the road to a better future is for the Palestinians themselves to change. They must transcend their geographical and ideological differences and rally around a single national project. The only configuration that can advance a gradual democratization process and deliver practical solutions to all Israeli Jews and to all Palestinians—whether they reside in a refugee camp, the diaspora, the West Bank, Gaza, or Israel—is

a single, binational state. Building one should be the goal of all Palestinians.

Such a transition may take many years, but Palestinians must be the ones to initiate it. Otherwise, today's one-state reality will endure.

The No-State Solution

ROBERT SATLOFF

Foreign Affairs should be congratulated for publishing this breathtakingly tendentious essay by Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch, and Shibley Telhami because it exposes the authors' pseudo-academic argument as little more than political advocacy.

Why is this advocacy and not scholarship? Because in its eagerness to market the catchphrase "one-state reality," it neglects to mention the hard borders between Israel, Hamas-controlled Gaza, and the Palestinian Authority–controlled urban areas of the West Bank, which make it impossible for anyone—Israeli, Palestinian, or third-country national—to traverse the length and breadth of this supposedly single state and quite dangerous for anyone even to try. Because to make its case, it avoids inconvenient facts, such as the impressive advance of Arab Israelis within Israeli society in recent decades and the rejection of the "apartheid" label by many leading Arab figures on both sides of the Green Line, including the Knesset Member Mansour Abbas, the rights activist Bassem Eid, and the peace activist Mohammed Dajani. Because it disparages the state of Israel's democracy, which is older than those of about half the countries in the European Union, and makes only passing reference to the remarkable vitality of the country's civil society, underscored by the huge nationwide protests against proposed judicial reforms that began in early 2023. And because, without a single reference to Hezbollah missiles, Hamas rockets, or a potential Iranian nuclear bomb, it leaves the unsuspecting reader to wonder whether Israel's neighbors are Andorra, Lichtenstein, and Switzerland.

There is much in the essay about the regression of peace diplomacy since the failed Camp David summit in 2000, including the rightward turn of Israeli politics in response to the suicide bombings of the second Palestinian intifada, the expansion of Israeli settlements, and the apparent effect these developments have had on American attitudes toward Israel. But on closer inspection, the article is not really about the Palestinian issue at all. In the tall tale the authors tell, Palestinians make little more than cameo appearances, bearing responsibility for neither their decisions nor their fates.

The real point of this essay is to target Israel's existence as a Jewish state, a status established not just by events in British-controlled Palestine in the early decades of the twentieth century but also by a UN General Assembly resolution approved in November 1947 by a large majority of the world's independent countries, including the United States and the Soviet Union. "Israel's commitment to liberalism has always been shaky," the authors write

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ROBERT SATLOFF is Segal Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

in the article's most revealing passage. "As a Jewish state, it fosters a form of ethnic nationalism rather than a civic one." That argument flows easily into this policy advice: "A better U.S. policy would advocate for equality, citizenship, and human rights for all Jews and Palestinians living within the single state dominated by Israel."

Strip away the outrage at Israel's policy toward the Palestinians—about which there is plenty to critique—and the authors' goal becomes clear: to paint Israel itself as illegitimate, a country born in colonial sin and raised to maturity as an illiberal, ethnonationalist state that deserves not just to be condemned but also to be replaced. As much as the authors dress up their alternative with the language of human and civil rights, there is no getting around the perversity of advocating a solution that does away with the world's lone Jewish state.

Thankfully, the American people do not support the destruction of Israel and consistently elect presidents, senators, and representatives from both parties who support a thriving Jewish state. Indeed, the authors seem almost apoplectic that U.S. President Joe Biden, who is proud to call himself a Zionist, appears "fully committed to the status quo," which includes support for a strong Jewish state and an eventual negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It bears noting that "the deal of the century" put forward by his Republican predecessor—although flawed in many ways—still proposed the creation of a Palestinian state next to Israel on most of the territory occupied by Israel since 1967.

The fact that the authors' views were rejected by Washington and Moscow 75 years ago, were rejected by the once unthinkable number of Arab states now at peace with Israel, and would be rejected by both Biden and former U.S. President Donald Trump—two leaders who do not agree on much—says something about how far out on the fringe these views are. Yet they are still worrying. After all, the authors teach at major American universities.

They are right that Israel's current government includes some radicals with hateful ideas, that Israeli society is still grappling with fundamental issues of identity, and that Israelis (like Palestinians) suffer from a paucity of effective leadership. But as Americans well know, those last two issues are not unique to the Middle East, and solutions to them are likely to evolve over many years. As for the first issue, after 37 Israeli governments in 75 years, a version of Mark Twain's quip about New England weather seems apt: if you don't like Israel's coalition, wait a few months. But the authors have a very different diagnosis and a very different cure. In their view, the Jewish state itself is the problem, and getting rid of it is the answer. Let's call their proposal what it is: the No Israel Solution.

Barnett, Brown, Lynch, and Telhami Reply

As expected, our article generated strong feelings and deep disagreements. We argued that a one-state reality already exists; that it is akin to apartheid; that the invocation of an improbable two-state solution now merely serves as a

smokescreen to obscure this reality; that U.S. policy has uniquely enabled the entrenchment of a single state; and that Washington should stop providing cover for Israel's current policies and start demanding basic rights and protections for Jews and Palestinians alike, including by imposing sanctions on Israel for violations of human rights and international law. We did not advocate for a one-state solution, which under present conditions could only mean a deeply unjust political regime based on Jewish supremacy. Instead, we described the reality as it exists today.

Remarkably, the responses to our article did not seriously contest our central claim—that a single, deeply entrenched state now controls all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, there was little disagreement about the unjust nature of that reality (although some of our critics find it tolerable). Many bemoan this situation and would like it to be otherwise, but most recognize that it is not.

Whether such recognition is seen as a good or a bad thing is a quite different question. Our goal was to state clearly the facts that supporters of Israeli policies and many U.S. officials would much prefer to remain unspoken. Policy must be based on clear-eyed analysis rather than ideological narratives, political conveniences, or wishful thinking. For some, a description of the unjust reality is evidently more upsetting than the unjust reality itself.

NO WAY FORWARD

Our critics differ with us and with each other less on the question of the present reality than on questions about the past and the future: Who is to blame and what should be done about it? We are not interested in litigating the collapse of the peace process. There is enough blame to go around. Israeli governments, Palestinian leaders, and successive U.S. administrations all contributed to this outcome by enabling Israeli settlement construction, infrastructural development, administrative and legal fiat, and institutional decay in the Palestinian territories.

The two-state solution was once the best hope for a fair and just end to the conflict, but it is no longer realistically on offer. Martin Indyk is more optimistic than we are about the prospects for reviving two states. Like us, he seeks to avoid the blame game, acknowledge existing reality, and find a way forward. But he still pins his hopes on a destination to which he cannot identify a path.

At one time, Indyk's arguments might have been more persuasive, especially if U.S. diplomacy had been accompanied by the muscular measures toward Israel—official condemnation, reductions in aid, and even sanctions—that he now comes close to endorsing. But after decades of diplomatic failures and the emergence of a single state that looks very much like apartheid, advocates of a two-state solution have a much higher bar to clear. The strongest argument for two states has always been that it was the only realistic alternative. Now it appears utopian and out of reach. We do not advocate a one-state solution under the current conditions, since such an arrangement is unlikely to ensure basic human rights and justice for the Palestinians anytime soon. But nor do we believe that anyone is well served by continuing to pursue a long-

lost dream that has allowed leaders to avoid dealing with ugly realities.

Dahlia Scheindlin offers an incisive addendum to our portrait of those realities, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Her explanation of the ways in which Israel continues to control the territory reinforces our core argument, and we are happy to accept her reframing. Ironically, critics elsewhere have suggested that we overstate the degree to which Israel controls Gaza, since it shares a border with Egypt—as if Israel's close coordination with the Egyptian government (and not with the Palestinian leadership of Gaza) on the management of that border is not exactly what states typically do. Scheindlin also usefully reminds readers that deeply unjust arrangements can endure for far longer than we might like to believe. We emphatically agree.

Asad Ghanem provides another valuable addition, elaborating on how the failures of the Palestinian national movement both helped to prepare the foundation for the one-state reality and later capitulated to it. Only time will tell whether a revitalized Palestinian national movement could challenge this reality and move toward a one-state democracy, as Ghanem suggests.

DEPTHS OF DENIAL

The most revealing responses come from Michael Oren and Robert Satloff, who offer polemics instead of arguments. Israel certainly faces many security and political challenges, but its leaders have more choices than Oren or Satloff suggest. Both critics could have seriously reflected on Israel's present reality and offered possible paths forward. That they did not says something about the difficult position staunch supporters of Israel now find themselves in. They can neither rebut the existence of the one-state reality nor openly embrace the apartheid-like politics that flow from it. And so they insist on denying facts and decrying the dramatic shifts in political and policy discourse that have brought our views into the mainstream.

Oren's response will resonate with those who support Israel's current path but persuade few others, since it says nothing about the substantive issues at stake. He takes particular issue with our use of the term "Jewish supremacy," which he attempts to associate with Nazism and the Ku Klux Klan. As Oren well knows, the term is used routinely by Israeli Jews across much of the political spectrum, including by at least one former Israeli defense minister and one former Israeli foreign minister. And how would Oren describe the undeniable structural superiority of Jews over non-Jews in the entrenched one-state reality? His anger would be better directed at those who consciously seek to build a society in which Jews enjoy rights and privileges denied to others.

The most interesting part of Oren's response is his frank confession that he never believed the two-state solution was viable. And yet he blames its failure on the Palestinian people and their leaders, arguing that we understate the degree to which they sought to use the peace process as a stealth instrument to destroy Israel. But it was not Palestinians who built scores of Jewish settlements housing hundreds of thousands of Israelis across the West Bank, erected a vast array

of checkpoints impeding Palestinian movement, built roads and infrastructure exclusively for the use of settlers, and established legal and military regimes that control the lives of everyone in the territory. Oren got what he wished for, and what the Israeli government that he represented worked for when he served as its ambassador. He should be more willing to grapple with the results.

Oren mostly agrees with us about the likely course of the future, although he favors the trends we deplore. In the one-state reality we all see, Palestinians might be rewarded with fewer restrictions and more jobs if they accept their lot without making a fuss. Oren offers this as a preferred policy for an indefinite future. Left unsaid but made clear nonetheless is what happens if Palestinians do not react as he wishes (exercising, as one might say, their agency). In this case, Oren implies that the Palestinians will experience only more harshness from an Israel that continues to drift to the right—and that they should be blamed for their own victimization.

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

For his part, Satloff takes issue less with our message than with the messengers, attempting to disqualify us from the debate by suggesting we harbor ill intentions. But insisting that we seek the destruction of Israel does not make it true. We all previously supported the two-state solution. We all saw it as the most feasible way to accommodate Jewish and Palestinian national aspirations. And if the two-state solution miraculously became possible again tomorrow, we would not hesitate to back it.

Contrary to Satloff's assertion, we did not question that Israel's existence is legally rooted in international law and recognition by other states. We simply insist that the same international law that establishes Israel's sovereignty and legitimacy obligates it to behave in certain ways in the territory it controls. Israel fails to meet those obligations not because of a temporary occupation but because of an effective annexation of territory that deprives most of its inhabitants of basic human rights. If Satloff believes that such occupation is essential to Israel's nature, then he should be willing to clearly articulate and defend that position.

Throughout his response, Satloff imputes views to us that we did not express and do not hold. He would prefer to have an argument over whether Israel should be eliminated (a case we did not make and do not support) than to engage with our analysis of today's one-state reality. If we are dissatisfied with Israel's extreme right-wing government, he quips, we should just wait for the next one. But Benjamin Netanyahu has served as prime minister for 13 of the last 14 years, and his only real competition comes from the right. Satloff wants to celebrate the opposition of Israeli civil society to Netanyahu's judicial overhaul but neglects to mention that it has for the most part declined to criticize the occupation. He highlights three Palestinians who do not agree with our analysis; we could name rather more than three who do. More to the point, none of these criticisms touch the core of our argument.

RETHINKING THE "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP"

One legitimate criticism we have heard, from Scheindlin and others, is that the policy options we put forward are unrealistic, that the U.S. government is unlikely to heed our advice, and that, even if it did, our suggestions are unlikely to lead to a happy outcome. This is fair. Washington's long-standing support for Israel and a half-century occupation have left few good options, and the Biden administration does not seem interested in changing course right now. But our goal was not to lay out detailed policy prescriptions that would likely be adopted today. Rather, it was to widen the range of political possibilities by illuminating the ways in which U.S. policies have enabled—and continue to enable—the entrenchment of an apartheid-like one-state reality.

Washington's knee-jerk reaction to unsettled times is to push to revive fruitless negotiations. Instead, it should dismantle its "special relationship" with Israel and start holding the country to account. The United States should acknowledge that it cannot possibly have "shared values" with an apartheid-like state. A shift in language could change the narrative at home and create policy options down the road.

Washington should also stop shielding Israel from criticism at the United Nations and other international organizations for its violations of international law, including its construction of settlements. The Biden administration need not spend so much time and energy defending actions that it ostensibly opposes. Despite its full foreign-policy plate, the administration has sought to expand the Abraham Accords through an agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. In the absence of a meaningful Israeli policy change toward the Palestinians, such normalization would only further entrench the unjust one-state reality.

Finally, the United States should work with European countries to defend Palestinian rights and protect those who are subject to arbitrary and harsh rule. Human rights are essential for protecting Palestinian lives, land, and dignity. The United States has an obligation to help enforce those rights, including with sanctions.

The starting point for addressing today's grim reality should not be controversial: a demand for equal rights and protections and a political process that could begin to move Israel closer to providing them. Even the pro-Israel Biden administration has pledged to promote "equal measures of freedom, justice, security, and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians alike," as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken put it in December 2022. Yet too little of that commitment has been evident in practice.

In the long term, only two broad outcomes can ensure equality for Jews and non-Jews alike: two sovereign states or one state with full equality. We would endorse either of these outcomes over a single state that entrenches Jewish supremacy, as would most of the American people, polls show. Making that unambiguously clear through policies and actions may force Israelis and Palestinians to begin to find a way to coexist with dignity and equality. Above all, Washington should stop enabling a deeply unjust one-state reality.

Letters to the Editor

Who's to Blame for Iraq?

To the Editor:

In his review of Melvyn Leffler's book *Confronting Saddam Hussein*, Hal Brands ("Blundering Into Baghdad," March/April 2023) contends that the war in Iraq was "an understandable tragedy, born of honorable motives and genuine concerns." Brands's telling leaves out the decisive role played by a dense network of furious advocates of American global supremacy in the Pentagon and the office of Vice President Dick Cheney, a group that exploited the 9/11 attacks, crushed their pragmatic realist rivals elsewhere in the government, exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq, and plunged the United States into its biggest blunder since Vietnam.

Brands dismisses as "conspiracy theories" all accounts of the war's origins that blame "a nefarious cabal." But the war's backers in the George W. Bush administration did, in fact, operate like a cabal—which is why Lawrence Wilkerson, who served as chief of staff to Bush's secretary of state at the time, Colin Powell, used that term to describe them. Brands also ignores the role of influential groups outside government that pushed for war, chief among them the Project for a New American Century, an organization chaired by the pundit William Kristol. In 1996, he and the scholar Robert Kagan had advocated in these pages a "neo-Reaganite foreign policy" designed to establish the "benevolent global hegemony" of the United States, a posture they believed would enable "conservatives . . . to govern America over the long term." After 9/11, they pursued these objectives by invading and occupying a country that had nothing to do with the attacks and posed little threat to the United States.

Brands finds it significant that some of the war's most prominent champions were not neoconservatives but "conservative nationalists." So what? It has been established beyond question that Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—no matter what kind of conservatives they were—decided soon after the 9/11 attacks that the United States should invade Iraq and that they and their allies inside and outside government got the war they wanted by suppressing expert opinions that were harmful to their cause. By ignoring that reality, Brands's article adds insult to what was, for the United States, an appalling injury.

IAN S. LUSTICK
Lustick is Bess W. Heyman Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania.

Brands replies:
Ian Lustick's letter is a very good example of arguments that attribute the Iraq war to a sinister cabal of officials instead of grappling more deeply with why the United States chose, through the normal processes of its political system, to pursue a misguided war. I recommend that those interested in the debate read Leffler's book and decide which interpretation they find more persuasive and more likely to lead to a nuanced understanding of the conflict's lessons.

Spanish Fluke?

To the Editor:
In his capsule review of my book *Spain: The Trials and Triumphs of a Modern European Country* in the May/June 2023 issue, Andrew Moravcsik states that my central claim is "that Spain suffers from the problems typical of middle-income countries such as Brazil, Poland, and South Korea." This is inaccurate. The book makes no mention of South Korea and brings up Brazil only once, in a passage regarding municipal governance. The book's references to Poland mainly concern the kinship between its ruling party and Vox, Spain's hard-right faction. As I state in the first chapter of the book, between 1960 and 2000, Spain "became one of only a dozen countries in the world to make the leap from middle-income to high-income (developed) status." The book's central claim is that many of the problems Spain has suffered since 2008—austerity, political fragmentation and polarization, and varieties of populism—are shared by other advanced democracies and are not the result of an alleged exceptionalism.

MICHAEL REID
Reid was a staff journalist for The Economist *from 1994 to 2023.*

FOR THE RECORD

"The World Beyond Ukraine" (May/June 2023) incorrectly described the goals of the Adaptation Fund, a multilateral climate fund established in 2001. The article stated that the fund was tasked with raising $100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020, a target set by developed countries in 2009. In fact, that goal was not the responsibility of the fund alone to meet, but rather a collective goal announced by a large group of donor countries and institutions. The fund raises a much smaller amount of financing, mostly to support climate-change adaptation projects in developing countries. Its annual target for 2023, for instance, is $300 million.

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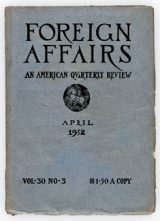
April 1952

"Korea in Perspective"

ADLAI E. STEVENSON

Nearly two years into the Korean War, soon-to-be Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson explained what was at stake in the conflict—and why ending it would be so messy. More than a year would pass before the belligerents signed an armistice that froze the war more or less where it had started. With the United States once again supporting a partner in a showdown with Moscow, the dilemmas Stevenson explored are both instructive and unsettling.

There is, of course, no tidy solution to the Korean problem, precisely because it is only a part of the whole Soviet imperialist drive—an episode, really, in the sweep of history which relentlessly confronts freedom with thralldom. . . . In Korea we have made plain to the Kremlin that we are not fooled by its use of catspaws, and that we recognize war fought at second hand when we see it. Our object is to convince them that other aggressions, disguised or direct, will meet the same response, and thus deter them from a perhaps fatal gamble. At the same time, by limiting the war in Korea, we hope to avoid a third general holocaust. We are trying to use force not only to frustrate our immediate antagonists in the hills of Korea but to preserve world peace. For that reason the full settlement of the Korean problem is likely to take a long time and to wait upon the settlement of many other issues. Once again, perspective.



It is possible, of course, that we may fail in our effort to keep the Korean fighting limited: for just as it takes only one to start a war, so it takes only one to prolong it. The aggressor is the one who decides whether or not the war he has started can be limited. But we have diligently and painfully sought to keep it from spreading. Given the terms of the problem, there is no guarantee of success. It simply seems wiser to pay large insurance premiums than to look forward to rebuilding after the fire.

“I always have to be doing something, helping someone.”

Oleksandra,
displaced person in Ukraine

When the war escalated, Oleksandra, an educator at a college in eastern Ukraine, thought the college staff was relocating to Dnipro for just a couple of weeks. More than a year later, she and her colleagues have made a hostel into a home. Oleksandra and her colleagues participate in the International Rescue Committee's classes that promote physical and psychological wellness.

The IRC is working in Ukraine to provide emergency assistance to people living in places where the needs are greatest.

This includes cash assistance, legal and medical support, and safe spaces for women and children.

Donate at **Rescue.org/GiveUkraine**

INTERNATIONAL
RESCUE
COMMITTEE

Google

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In addition, Google's Cybersecurity Workshop for Small Businesses equips small business owners with the digital skills and resources they need to protect what they've worked so hard to build.

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